

# **David and Goliath: Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of Battling Giants Study Guide**

**David and Goliath: Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of  
Battling Giants by Malcolm Gladwell**

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# Contents

<a href="#">David and Goliath: Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of Battling Giants Study Guide.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Summary.....</a>	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">Part One: Chapters 1 - 2.....</a>	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">Part One: Chapter 3.....</a>	<a href="#">8</a>
<a href="#">Part Two: Chapters 4 - 6.....</a>	<a href="#">12</a>
<a href="#">Part Three: Chapter 7.....</a>	<a href="#">16</a>
<a href="#">Part Three: Chapters 8 - 9.....</a>	<a href="#">19</a>
<a href="#">Important People.....</a>	<a href="#">22</a>
<a href="#">Objects/Places.....</a>	<a href="#">27</a>
<a href="#">Themes.....</a>	<a href="#">30</a>
<a href="#">Styles.....</a>	<a href="#">34</a>
<a href="#">Quotes.....</a>	<a href="#">36</a>
<a href="#">Topics for Discussion.....</a>	<a href="#">39</a>



## Summary

“David and Goliath” by Malcolm Gladwell is a non-fiction book that provides statistical and scientific evidence, anecdotal proof and theory about the weak versus the strong – David versus Goliath – and how the underdog oftentimes astonishes everyone by defeating the giant. Research indicates that small countries can defeat large countries militaristically if the large country is too resource heavy. The weaker opposition does not have as many resources as the stronger side and therefore has to devise unconventional ways to be on the path to victory. Such a method is often the winning strategy due to the element of surprise and the stronger side’s narrow and limited approach to the battle. Lawrence of Arabia and his 200 ragtag Bedouin defeated 1,200 well-armed and well-trained Turkish soldiers because of an unexpected strategy.

The author tells the story of a father who became the coach of his young daughter’s basketball team. The father knew little about basketball and the girls on his team were untalented and inexperienced. In order to even the playing field, the coach had to think outside the box. The father-coach connected with one element of basketball – winning. It was his nature to always want to win. He decided the best way to keep the better trained and more talented opposition from winning was to not let them have the ball. He therefore taught his girls to be aggressive defensively which got them to the finals.

French Impressionist painters from the late 19th century were faced with changing their painting style so their works could be hung in the Salon the elite exhibit for new painters. Art critics and patrons didn’t favor the Impressionists style, and therefore the works of the now famous artists were kept out of the important showing. The painters had two choices: change their style or open their own exhibit. Thankfully for the world of art at large, the artists decided to show their art in their own venue and not abandon their artistic style. Had they conformed to the opinions of the critics of the day, their priceless paintings would not be hanging in all the major museums around the world today.

Part of being a winner as an adult is oftentimes due to various forms of hardship during childhood. Losing a parent to either death or abandonment has a devastating impact on a child. But a child learns to fill that void in different ways – sometimes good and sometimes bad. The child who makes lemonade out of lemons and learns from the pain of not having a parent emerges from childhood stronger and wiser and most importantly he learns how to survive and is ready to do battle as an adult.

The author places much focus on dyslexic individuals who have a rough time learning because of their reading disability. They don’t see words backwards; they see the words plainly but take an inordinate amount of time to connect meaning to the word. The condition was caused by misfiring neurons during fetal development. Just like the child who was abandoned, the dyslexic child has a rough time in school and with his peers. If can’t read like a “normal” child and, therefore, must learn how to devise workarounds. As he develops and hones that skill, he can often surpass individuals who were great

readers as kids. Many famous and successful people are dyslexic and recognize that their disability and the suffering it caused helped to make them who they are.

Those who have power and mistreat the underdog may be doing so at their own risk.

# Part One: Chapters 1 - 2

## Summary

When Vivek Ranadivé became the coach for Redwood City, his daughter's basketball team, he decided it was best to try to keep the other team from getting to their goal. None of his girls were particularly skilled but Ranadivé's winning strategy using the full court press and his natural instinct to never lose won the day and a slot in the national championships for the team.

Research conducted by political scientist Ivan Arreguín-Toft proved that when a large country fought a small country it would lose if its force was at 71.5 percent of their military power even though its military was ten times the size of the smaller army. Arreguín-Toft took it a step further and asked what happened when the weak side didn't agree to fight in the conventional way the stronger side expected to fight – like David and Goliath. He concluded from his work that the weak side would win 63.6 percent of the time. A weak opponent opting to fight in an unconventional manner is more likely to win over its stronger opponent.

One underdog who famously defeated the odds was Lawrence of Arabia who commanded an unskilled band of Arabs that was successful in destroying a railroad the Turks had built from Damascus deep into the Hejaz Desert. Lawrence fooled the Turks, who had a formidable military but made some unwise presumptions. The Turks were certain they would be attacked in Aqaba from the west. Surely no enemy would travel through the oppressive desert to the east. But that is exactly what Lawrence of Arabia and his 200 band of ragtag warriors did and defeated a force of 1,200 skilled Turkish soldiers. An underdog often wins because of the absence of material resources which forces him to device another way to victory.

Ranadivé advanced to the championship rounds because his team relied on an aggressive, high risk approach because they lacked experience and skill. Ranadivé gave the girls simple instructions like, "Don't let the other girls get the ball on the inbound." The team focused on a strong defense which diverted attention to their lack of skill and offense.

In 1971, the Fordham University Rams beat Amherst when their star player was the young Dr. J who went on to become a star in the NBA. The Rams were not nearly as talented as Amherst and but they were scrappy and aggressive and beat their opponent by twelve points. Despite such successes, basketball coaches rarely use the full-court press as a winning tactic. It wasn't a perfect strategy because all the other team had to do was push back. When underdogs lose it can usually be attributed to their unwillingness to fight. To play and win by David's "rules" in slaying the giant, a team or individual has to be up against the wall with no other options.



The success of the Redwood City girls enraged the other teams and coaches. It was thought by some that they were being too aggressive, playing unfair. The aggressive play of the girls threw the players and the coaches off. The girls weren't "basketball" players; they were marauders. Lawrence of Arabia wasn't a military officer; he was an archeologist and poet. David wasn't a warrior; he was a shepherd. Being a misfit and underdog allows an individual to think outside the box and try something unconventional. They weren't trained into one way of approaching an issue.

Shepaug Valley Middle School in rural Connecticut initially had an enrollment of 300 children. However, when the charming area was discovered by wealthy families, property values skyrocketed and many families were not able to afford the area. As a result, the school population eventually dropped to just 200 students, with only 80 pupils in the sixth grade and numbers continuing to dwindle. Would it be an advantage to send your child to the school? Does its elite status translate to an elite education?

At first blush, it would seem advantageous for a child to be in uncrowded classroom. The teacher would be able to give each child extra attention. It is widely held that a smaller classroom is beneficial to the student. A natural study conducted by economist Caroline Hoxby found that class size made no difference in academic performance. Other studies support her findings.

A highly successful figure in Hollywood had from a young age worked hard and earned his own money. He went to Hollywood after graduation from college and ultimately climbed the show business ladder into phenomenal success. There is overwhelming evidence that it is more difficult to raise children in a wealthy environment. If not handled properly by parents, wealth can squelch a child's ambition and cause the child to have low self-esteem.

It is a struggle to raise children with limited resources. But having money doesn't translate to being a good parent. Research has shown that an income over \$75,000 stops making a difference in the happiness and well-being of a family. The psychologist James Grubman sees a similarity between immigrant parents raising their children in a new culture and newly wealthy parents raising their children in the world of the privileged class. He referred to the nouveau rich as "immigrants to wealth." Children quickly catch on that they don't really have to lift a finger to have whatever they want.

Teresa DePrito, the principal at Shepaug Valley Middle School, in Connecticut knew that the decreasing number of students was not a good trend. Smaller classes are easier for a teacher to handle – less papers to grade and fewer children to get to know. But can a class be too small to be effective? Small groups of students can be "taken over" by a bully in the group. The all-important diversity of the class is watered down and debate and class discussion can vanish. A small class can be as difficult as a large class for a teacher to lead.

Economist Jesse Levin conducted research that revealed that the number of peers that a student has in his class has a direct correlation to his academic performance. Poor students particularly struggle in small classes because they traditionally learn from their



peers. Teresa DePrito was concerned about her six graders who were on the verge of adolescence and had lots of concerns and questions about the future. She wanted them to be able to have robust discussions which is not possible in small classes.

DePrito also recognized that teachers who are faced with the demands inherent in larger classes, rise to the challenge. Teachers in large classes must create a strategy and tactics in order for the children to get the most out of their education. At the Hotchkiss private school just up the road from Shepaug where tuition is \$50,000 a year, the typical class size is twelve. Among other costly features, there is a golf course and two hockey rinks on the campus and twelve Steinway pianos throughout the school proper. This overt display of opulence is for the benefit of the parents to make them feel they're getting their money's worth. However, academic results suffer from the small classroom sizes no matter how many pianos or skating rinks are thrown at it.

## Analysis

To set the stage for the author's contention that with the right strategy the weak can defeat the strong, Gladwell provides anecdotal evidence to support his claims. By using this approach, the author is appealing to the reader on a personal level – providing accounts that they can easily identify with. He gets their attention with dramatic instances where a David defeats a Goliath by outthinking him.

Gladwell cites the inexperienced basketball coach with unskilled players who finds victory by ramping up his defense and keeping the ball from the talented opposition. He provides an account of the victory of a small band of ragtag Arabs led by Lawrence of Arabia over a large force of trained and armed Turkish soldiers. Their surprise attack threw the Turks off and defeated them.

Gladwell provides statistics and research that proves that academic performance in small classrooms is no better - and in fact oftentimes falls short - of that in large classrooms. Gladwell renders conventional wisdom impotent with the official research he cites and the individual stories he tells.

## Vocabulary

resonated, daunting, formidable, audacious, masterstroke, inhospitable, vulnerable, indefatigable, insurgency, calibrated, bucolic, euphemistically, mogul, cantankerous



# Part One: Chapter 3

## Summary

In the late-nineteenth century, Artist Édouard Manet, the celebrated artist, gathered his fellow painters every evening at Café Guerois in the Batignolles neighborhood of Paris, France. Manet was gregarious and talkative and often got into heated but friendly debates with Edgar Degas who was his best friend. Paul Cezanne was moody and said very little. Claude Monet lacked the education of the others and his friend Pierre-Auguste Renoir was pleasant and easy-going. Camille Pissaro was political and highly principled and was the moral compass of the group and admired by all.

This group of painters was collectively known as the Impressionist Movement. They painted with each other, next to each other and did portraits of each other. They supported one another in their common pursuits and love of art. Their work was not well-accepted by the art critics of the day. No one was interested in their work; they were truly starving artists.

During that era, art was treated like a profession by the French government. It was regulated by the Ministry of the Imperial House of Fine Arts. A promising painter would enter an educational program that was highlighted with periodic competitions. Those who did well and won awards would continue on while those who did not fare well were removed from the program. The Salon was the pinnacle of the process and was the most important art exhibition in all of Europe. Artists from all over the world participated. Those paintings deemed acceptable were hung on the walls of the Palais for six weeks during which time up to a million people would view them. Medals were awarded to the best paintings. Most art-lovers preferred only paintings with Salon approval. There was much apprehension among participating artists. At least one artist who didn't make it killed himself.

The Impressionists did not fit the mold of the Salon painter. Their brushstrokes were visible, they painted everyday life instead of fantasy, their figures were blurred and indistinct. The Salon judges viewed their work as amateurish. Manet was able to get one painting through but it was laughable to some and shocking to others and quickly removed. The works of other Impressionists that squeaked through were also removed mid-way through the exhibition.

The group debated whether to conform with Salon requirements or organize their own exhibition. They ultimately made the right decision and followed their art which is why today their works hang in every major museum in the world.

Caroline Sacks had been interested in drawing and science since she was a child. She decided on Brown University in Rhode Island for college. Brown is an Ivy League school and generally ranks in the top twenty colleges in the US. Her second choice was the University of Maryland which has a much lower ranking.





Like the Impressionists who weighed Salon against their own exhibition, Caroline wasn't choosing the best option, she was choosing between two different options. Salon was like an Ivy League school, selective and prestigious – everyone wanted to get in. It was the way to get public notice as an artist. The Salon was the Big Pond and most artists were Little Fish.

The Impressionists opened an exhibition in April 1874. There were 3,500 visitors; their art gained the attention and recognition they sought. They felt liberated and more inspired than ever. There was never before or since a collection of modern art that was destined to become as priceless as the works displayed at the Impressionists' exhibition. The relatively few paintings displayed would be valued at more than \$1 billion in modern times.

Caroline had a similar challenge. Did she want to be a Big Fish in a Little Pond or a Little Fish in a Big Pond? Toward the end of her freshman year, Caroline had trouble with chemistry and dropped the course. She was stunned; she'd always excelled in her classes. She took organic chemistry with similar disastrous results. She was comparing herself to students at one of the most competitive schools in the world. She decided to give up what she had always loved – science.

Caroline was suffering from what sociologist Samuel Stouffer termed "relative deprivation," also referred to as "The Big Fish-Little Pond Effect." In World War II, Military Policemen rated their organization much higher than soldiers in the Air Corps which was to become the Air Force. It made no sense; enlisted men in the Air Corps had a much better chance of advancing than did MPs. But that was at the crux of the matter. MPs were rarely promoted, but when they were there were congratulations all around. Since 50% of the Air Corpsmen were advanced, a promotion wasn't special. It is human nature to make a comparison with people in your own group. Depressed people who live in "happy" countries are suicide risks because they feel alone and apart.

How a person feels about how he fits into his environment matters. Self-concept is a crucial part of motivation and confidence in one's abilities. Herbert Harsh pioneered the Big-Fish-Little Pond theory. He believed that most parents and children made their educational choices for the wrong reasons. Parents with children in elite schools had a more positive self-concept than the students did.

Many students find math and science so difficult - especially at the elite schools - that they drop out and opt for a less demanding course of study which has resulted in a shortage of scientists and engineers in the U.S. Had Caroline chosen Maryland, she may have stayed in science because she wouldn't have felt like the dumbest kid in class. Fred Glimp director of admissions at Harvard in the 60s recognized how demoralizing the Big Pond was to everyone expect the very top students. He recruited students who were tough and could survive the stress of being a Small Fish in Harvard's Large Pond. Harvard accepts a number of outstanding athletes who fall short academically because they have substantial achievements outside the classroom resulting in healthy self-concepts.



There has always been controversy over affirmative action. Some feel minorities should be given the chance to attend elite schools because of discrimination they've faced in their lives. Others feel that affirmative action should be used to recruit brilliant students who are from poor families. A third group believes that admission should be based strictly on academic merit alone. Law schools aggressively recruit black students who otherwise wouldn't meet basic qualifications. Over half of all black law students are in the bottom 10 percent of their class and 75 percent fall in the lower 20 percent.

People have an image of what an advantage is. In Paris in the late 1800s, Salon was considered the top place for the display of art. It's conventional wisdom that small classrooms are beneficial to students. And it's the goal of parents to have their children attend the elite colleges and universities. But freedom can provide its own opportunities. Wrong choices are made by misinterpreting the battle between underdog and giant. Caroline felt she would have stayed in the field of science had she chosen to go to Maryland instead of Brown. The world lost a scientist.

## Analysis

The author uses a grand example to exemplify what the stakes can be when a person or individual decides to buck the system, to abandon tradition and do something that's never been done before and that may even be against laws or regulations. These individuals are true nihilists, pioneers and vanguards. According to psychologist Jordan Peterson, innovative people and revolutionaries are a combination of the personality traits that comprise the Five Factor Model. It takes a person who is the right balance of neuroticism, extraversion, openness, conscientiousness and agreeableness or disagreeableness to create unconventional ways of accomplishing goals and making groundbreaking advancements. As such, the person is automatically a misfit and an underdog. He is ostensibly creating something that has never before been seen or planning behavior that has never before been done.

The artists of the Impressionist Movement including Manet, Monet, Pissarro, Renoir, Cézanne and Degas among others attempted to have their art hung at the Salon exhibition. The Salon was the premiere venue for the display of the works of new and up and coming artists in Paris, France, in the late 19th Century. Unfortunately, the works of the Impressionist painters was deemed not up to traditional standards and was rejected by Salon art critics. These young painters were told that they were selecting the wrong subjects for their works, that their brush strokes showed and that the subjects or objects they painted were blurry and indistinct.

The artists had two choices: conform to current standards or exhibit their work in their own exhibit. In the end, none of the artists would abandon their art and they opened their own exhibit. They obviously made the right decision. By bucking the system, the world was able to enjoy a new form of art, one that has lasted to current days and hangs in every major museum around the world.



## Vocabulary

gregarious, ornery, gravitas, indigenous, prestigious, impressionist, deprivation, demoralized, counterintuitive

## Part Two: Chapters 4 - 6

### Summary

There are such things as “desirable difficulties.” Psychologists presented the CRT (Cognitive Reflection Test), a very difficult test, in its original form to a group of students and then presented the same test with light gray italic printing that was difficult to read. Students had to try harder to read the questions on the second test. The extra energy expended paid off with higher scores on the test with the questions that were difficult to read.

Not all “difficulty” is desirable or has desirable results. Could having dyslexia ever be considered a “desirable difficulty?” There are very successful people with dyslexia including Richard Branson, British billionaire entrepreneur, and David Boies famed attorney who represented Al Gore in Gore v Bush before the U.S. Supreme Court. Jay Friereich had a difficult childhood. His father committed suicide, his mother abandoned him emotionally, he lost a nanny who had really been his mother and as a youth was heading for a life of crime. Jay learned “the fight” early and later in life after becoming a successful physician when met with adversities, he had the skills necessary to face them, not give up and ultimately survive.

In the years leading up to World War II, there were dire predictions about the number of dead and wounded there would be if Germany attacked London. In 1940, the warnings started to become reality. German bombers attacked London for 57 consecutive nights. Forty-thousand were killed and another 46,000 were injured. Neighborhoods were destroyed. Although a major panic had been expected when bombing commenced, it never happened. Those who stayed in the city were not only brave but seemed almost indifferent to the assaults.

Was this unexpected attitude attributable to the British “stiff upper lip?” But even foreigners in London at the time had the same non-reaction. J. T. MacCurdy, a Canadian psychiatrist, offered a theory in his book, “The Structure of Morale.” He separated the victims into three groups: those killed, near misses, and remote misses. In the end, the “remote misses” comprised the largest group. They had survived the bombings and were emboldened by their experience. The British government led by Winston Churchill had been sure that even those not injured would be as traumatized but was proven wrong. They had jumped to the conclusion that there would be only one type of response to the bombings.

The Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth was an ally of Martin Luther King, Jr. He announced he was going to ride on one of Birmingham’s “white” bus. Subsequently, his house was flattened in a bomb. Everyone feared he was dead but then heard a voice call out, “I’m not coming out naked.” He was unhurt and he basically told the sheriff to tell the Klan to bring it on. God had saved him for the fight.



Should Jay Friereich have been glad that he went through childhood trauma and struggled in his early life? No child should have to endure the feelings of abandonment that Jay was forced to deal with. David Boies has two dyslexic sons and it broke his heart to watch them struggle with their reading and other subjects. Those with dyslexia who have great achievements recognize the role that their condition played in their success. They also knew the pain and suffering and humiliation that it brought them and would not wish it upon their children despite the success they enjoyed.

Society needs people who can emerge from profound pain and unrelenting challenges. They emerge from the train wreck ready to invent, to innovate and to do battle.

In 1963, Martin Luther King came to Birmingham when his movement was in crisis. He had staged protests in Georgia but had made no progress. The biggest win in Civil Rights had been in 1954 when the Supreme Court ruled in favor of Brown in Brown v. Board of Education. It declared that segregation in public schools was unconstitutional. Despite the ruling, schools in the South were still segregated. Hard-line segregationists had taken over the state governments. Birmingham was the most racially divided city in the nation.

The openly racist Eugene “Bull” Connor was Birmingham’s public safety commissioner. When King met with his planning team, he made the dire prediction that not all of them would live through the planned protest. King was the ultimate underdog and he knew it. He’d battled a lot of “giants” in his time by the time he arrived in Birmingham, and he was ready for the fight.

Wyatt Walker was the ground coordinator for the Birmingham protest. While they couldn’t defeat Bull Connor, Wyatt taunted him into throwing them into the briar patch just as Brer Rabbit had done to Brer Fox. They had to create a crisis to draw attention to their protest. The perfect opportunity arose when a young, well-dressed black man was attacked by a police dog. The young man seemed to lean into the dog with a stoic face absent of fear. A photo was snapped of the incident and it became the most famous photo of the Civil Rights movement.

While King and Shuttlesworth were the face of the civil rights fight, Walker stayed in the shadows. Bull Connor had no idea who he was. King was non-violent; Walker would resort to physical violence if pushed. He liked to play tricks on Connor; he was Brer Rabbit to Connor’s Brer Fox.

The plan he devised for the Birmingham protest was called Plan C – for confrontation. The staging area was near downtown Birmingham. The main goal was to draw attention to the devastating segregation that black residents were subjected to. Place C had three acts: sit-ins at restaurants; boycotts; and mass marches to fill up the jails. They needed everything to work smoothly. They had just experienced a failed protest in Albany and didn’t need another failure. Support began to erode from local blacks who feared retribution. Project C was losing its fire. Only a handful of people were willing to march in the protest.



Walker figured that if black people lined the street, Connor would figure they were all protesting. To Connor all blacks were protestors and trouble-makers. They recruited students who came to the rally at the Baptist church. Connor and the police arrested 600 kids the first day. The next day, 1,500 kids skipped school and came to the rally. Connor, the cops and firemen equipped with fire hoses ready to pounce were outside. Connor was anxious to use his police dogs to end the protest. It was at this rally that the young boy was attacked by the K-9 dog. The AP photographer captured the moment and the photo was seen in every major newspaper in the country.

Walker messed with Bull Connor's head leading him to believe they had many more protestors than they actually had. They pretended to be shocked that Connor unleashed his dogs on the kids but they were thrilled that it was captured on film. It brought the desired result – attention to the strife that blacks in the deep South were living under.

Walker and King were David to Bull Connor's Goliath. They had to use whatever tactics they could in their fight for Civil Rights.

## Analysis

In this section the author emphasizes the unusual concept that difficulties can be desirable. He does not paint this theory with a broad brush. He is careful to stress that not all difficulties are desirable or can be made to be desirable. In keeping with the positive look that the author lends to the overarching topic of the book – the weak defeating the powerful – Gladwell puts a positive spin on difficulties that can be perceived in a desirable way or can be transformed into something of benefit or value.

Sensitive to those who suffer from dyslexia and their loved ones, Gladwell carefully approaches the concept that dyslexia could present a positive force in someone's life. He lays out his case with examples of famous people who suffered as children with the debilitating nature of the condition only to reach incredible heights as adults. The theory is that the child with the condition goes through a virtual school of hard knocks trying to keep up. In his struggles he learns to devise work-arounds and innovative approaches to attain the end goal. Later, as an adult, the individual applies what he learned the hard way as a child to adult-sized problems and challenges.

Gladwell also presents anecdotes that exemplify those who do not cave to pressures or comply with conventional standards that they feel unjust or wrong-headed. In the Deep South parables like Brer Rabbit and the briar patch gave oppressed blacks hope. Brer Patch and other characters like him were known as "trickster heroes." Brer Rabbit tricked Brer Fox into throwing him into the briar patch because a rabbit is no match for a fox. The blacks felt they had to devise ways around laws and racist officials in order to attain the civil rights that they were entitled to. The tricksters weren't tricky by nature; they were tricksters out of necessity.

## Vocabulary

dyslexia, neurons, ventricular, profound, cognitive, entrepreneur, formidable, litigator, gravitate, neuroticism, extraversion, sweatshop, incendiary, stoicism, tumultuous, bereavement, platelets, concession, paradoxical, innocuous, malicious, droll, triumvirate, absolutist, nuance



## Part Three: Chapter 7

### Summary

In the summer of 1969, Rosemary Lawlor was a newlywed and a new mother. She and her husband had just bought a house in Belfast in Northern Ireland. There was unrest and growing violence between the Catholics and Protestants. The young family was in danger and left with almost nothing. They fled to the Catholic neighborhood of Ballymurphy in West Belfast also known as the Lower Falls where her family lived.

By 1970 things had deteriorated even further. British armored cars were patrolling the streets and there were vicious gun battles in nearby communities. That same year economists Nathan Leites and Charles Wolf, Jr., wrote a report on how to deal with insurgencies entitled, "Rebellion and Authority." It covered everything from the war in Vietnam, law enforcement in general, civil unrest and terrorism. Their theory was that the powerful had to give no consideration to the concerns of the oppressed. Ian Freeland, a no-nonsense general was in charge of British forces in Northern Ireland. He was tough and not reticent in the use of force. A riot started after British soldiers and police searched a house and discovered a cache of weapons and ammunition.

Freeland and his forces soon tamped the violence, and the next day the community appeared peaceful. He thought he and his troops would be gone in a few months. Instead, there was a bloody war that lasted 30 years. They mistakenly presumed that since the British forces were more powerful in number and resources, the Irish Catholics would be compliant. Historians later concluded that it was the manner in which the British treated the people and the situation that perpetuated the rebellion more than it was the spirit of the insurgency. The rebels were given no opportunity to vent their anger or express their feelings and beliefs.

An authority is effective when it follows the three steps of the "principle of legitimacy." 1) Those who are expected to obey must feel they have a voice; 2) rules must remain the same; and 3) the authority is fair.

In the destitute Brownsville neighborhood of Brooklyn an experiment had been going on for several years. While crime was going down in most areas of New York City, crime in Brownsville remained high. In 2003, Police Officer Joanne Jaffe became head of the city's House Bureau with authority over the Brownsville housing projects. She put together a list of juvenile residents who had committed crimes and formed a task force to reach out to these youngsters. The task force officers and encouraged the kids to return to school or get a job and go straight. The program was called J-RIP for Juvenile Robbery Intervention Program. It was an intense program with officers and resources available 24/7.

Joanne was very selective about the type of officers recruited for the program. She focused on officers who loved kids and had an empathetic nature. She stressed the





importance of her officers getting to know the parents of these kids. Joanne asked and got \$2,000 from the Police Commissioner to get turkeys for each family for Thanksgiving.

Every youth in the projects had either a father, brother or cousin who had served jail time. When that is a kid's reality, it is understandable that he has learned to distrust the police. Joanne's problem was how to get these kids to listen to her. They were teenagers who were already drifting into crime. The task force kept up their efforts and delivered Christmas gifts and toys and had a dinner for all the families. They helped get them summer jobs and took them to doctor appointments.

Joanne Jaffe proved Leites and Wolf wrong. The power actually was in the hands of the authority who cared what their adversaries thought. How the kids perceived the cops was integral to the success that she hoped to attain.

In July during "marching season" on what was called the Night before the Twelfth in Northern Ireland, there were parades and street parties held by the Protestant Loyalists celebrating past victories over the Catholics. They burned effigies of the Pope and other Catholic figures and symbols. An incident that began the 1969 Troubles happened during this celebratory time. Houses were burned down and there was fighting in the streets.

General Freeland didn't have the legitimacy to enforce the law during the unrest. The British Army and police who were charged with keeping peace were all Protestant and usually sided with the Loyalists. Instead of considering the Catholic perspective, Freeland just got tougher with them. The IRA proclaimed that they would shoot a policeman for every Irishman who was shot. Even though there were dozens of deaths and hundreds of injuries, the British stood firm. The army implemented a new policy known as internment which suspended civil rights in Northern Ireland which became an occupied state. Young Catholic men were rounded up and arrested.

Rosemary Lawlor's 17-year-old brother was shot and killed by a British soldier. The family was destroyed. A whole new existence had been forced upon Rosemary. People called it the Troubles but it was War. A conflict broke out between British soldiers and Catholic youths after a raid of St. Peter's Cathedral. The youth threw rocks; the soldiers responded with tear gas. The crowd grew angrier and a general riot broke out. The Cathedral priest had told the soldiers to get out of the area as quickly as possible after the raid. Instead, the patrol stopped when their armored cars were being struck with rocks. The priest pleaded with the soldiers to leave but their response was to launch more tear gas; the priest was a victim of that gassing. A huge riot broke out. Roadblocks were set up and curfews were ordered. There were deaths, multiple injuries and many arrests.

The curfew had gone on past 36 hours and the people were out of their daily bread. Led by activists Harriet Carson and Marie Drumm, women began to gather until they numbered in the thousands. They were determined to have bread and milk for their children. The women, many pushing prams, marched defiantly past armed British



soldiers. The soldiers assaulted the women, beat and shoved them, even stooped to hair-pulling. People came out of their houses and the numbers of protesters swelled. The women pushed on until the soldiers finally gave up. Feeling jubilant, Rosemary later told her father that the British Army had brought it on themselves. The young mothers of Belfast were not going to let their children suffer. These women, Rosemary Lawlor among them, had broken the curfew established by the British Army.

## Analysis

In this section, the author provides a look at the other side of the issue – the giant, the individual in authority – and how the misinterpretation of their power can backfire on them. When the British Army first occupied Northern Ireland during early conflicts between Protestants and Catholics the army officer in charge of the operation believed that being increasingly harsher in his treatment of the errant Catholics would put them in their place. He felt that he and his officers could return Belfast to peace in a few weeks or months. He was a little off with his predictions; the conflict lasted 30 years.

Gladwell points out that the British Army violated the three elements of legitimate authority. The British did not allow the Irish Catholics to air their grievances; he changed the rules of the game to suit the British; and was unfair and biased in favor of the Protestants. Had the British exercised the principles of legitimacy in their efforts to gain control of the situation, the history of the conflicts between the Catholics and the Protestants, known euphemistically as the Troubles, would have probably been quite different. Rather than being submissive, the Irish Catholics became emboldened by the unfair treatment and grew increasingly strong and defiant.

The author contrasts the behavior of the British Army in the face of major unrest to the approaches that a NYC police officer took in trying to rein in crime in the Brownsville housing projects. The polar opposite of the British officer who totally botched the conflict in Northern Island was the New York City police officer who used her authority to reach out to juveniles who were drifting toward a life a crime. While not compromising her duties or the law, she and her task force did everything to reach the youths that she knew could have a better life than the ones they felt they were destined for. By drawing this comparison, Gladwell makes the point that the abuse of authority is only a temporary fix and ultimately comes back to bite with very large teeth.

## Vocabulary

derogatory, insurgencies, mayhem, implicitly, effigy, beleaguered, ostensibly, internment, religiosity



## Part Three: Chapters 8 - 9

### Summary

Eighteen-year-old Kimber Reynolds was killed by two meth addicts who were attempting to rob her. She was shot in the head with a .357 magnum and died the next day. Mike Reynolds had a very close relationship with his daughter. Ray Appleton, the host of a local talk radio show, recalled how the town went berserk after her murder. He called Mike and invited him to come on the show. It was a difficult two hours for Mike. Near the end of the show the two men began discussing the crime and California's justice system. Calls started pouring in from across the state.

Mike organized a meeting in his home of people who wanted to make a difference. He had judges, lawyers, sheriffs and people from schools and government. It was the consensus that the state's penalties for convicted criminals were too lenient. One of Kimber's murderers had been in trouble since he was thirteen. He was released to visit his pregnant wife and never returned. Together the group wrote a simple proposal for a new law. They called it the Three Strikes Law which basically required repeat offenders to serve subsequently more severe sentences each time they broke the law. The third offense brought a 25 years to life sentence – no matter what the felony.

The law struck a nerve with the people of California and was signed into law in 1994. The prison population increased and crime went down. Murders alone were cut in half. Reynolds mourned his daughter 20 years later but was proud of the legislation that he was instrumental in passing. When a number of scholars looked into the results of the Three Strikes Law, they found that it was not nearly effective as first thought. Reynolds had made the same assumption that Leites and Wolf made: that individuals or groups behave rationally and make decisions based on cost and benefits. It was presumed that the law would deter crime because the cost was high.

The criminal who shot Kimber Reynolds was high on meth and shot her after he took her purse. He didn't like the way she was looking at him. He was not thinking "rationally." Criminals interviewed by criminologists Richard Wright and Scott Decker seemed indifferent to threats of punishment. Criminals often act on impulse; many think they won't be caught. Statistics show that criminals are most active in their twenties and present less of a threat as they mature. Tacking on an extra five years is meaningless in most cases. The longer a criminal stays in prison the less likely he will be able to contribute to society once he is released. Reynolds would like to attribute the drop in crime in California to his law. However, the crime rate was dropping before the enactment of the three strikes law.

Wilma Derksen's 13-year-old daughter Candace was abducted and murdered when walking to the bus stop after school. A man who was the parent of a murdered child met with them. The man who killed his daughter had served only four years and was exonerated on appeal. He shared the details of the murder and the subsequent trials.



The man was obsessed with getting justice. Wilma and her husband took the man's behavior as a warning. They could become obsessed and bitter if they allowed the murder to consume them.

Wilma talked in terms of forgiving the murderer at some point. Was Mike Reynolds more heroic than Wilma Derksen because of his quest for justice? The Derksens were Mennonites, a non-violent religious sect. They resisted the natural feelings of striking out and getting revenge. Wilma was uncertain what such a reaction would really accomplish. The Mennonite philosophy was to forgive and move on. It was obvious that Mike Reynolds would be grieving forever. It became apparent that Mike Reynolds's law was not practical because it painted all crimes with too broad a brush. It did not distinguish between the severity of the felony – stealing a few slices of pizza was treated the same as murder. Like Reynolds, General Freeland did not understand the limits of authority and power and how going too far could have an adverse impact. There are constraints on the power that those in authority have.

In 2007, 20 years after Candace was murdered, the police found the killer. Mark Grant had a history of sexual offenses. He was brought to trial in 2011. Wilma didn't know how she'd react with everything being stirred up again. The worst part of the trial was Wilma's realization that Candace had been tortured. Initially she wasn't sure she could forgive him but finally she recognized that if she became vengeful and obsessed she could destroy her entire family.

In 1940, the German Army occupied France and allowed the French to set up a government in the city of Vichy, headed by French World War I hero Marshal Philippe Petain. He was a dictator and who adhered to German policies. He rounded up Jews and put them in camps and implemented other draconian regulations. School children had to salute the French flag with a fascist salute. Those living in the town of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon refused to comply. The local Huguenot pastor was André Trocmé who was a pacifist but was unwilling to sacrifice his values and beliefs to avoid conflict.

André Trocmé believed that forcing school children to give the fascist salute was against the church's values and, therefore, banned it. He and his fellow teachers refused to sign an oath of loyalty to the dictator. Conditions for Jews across Europe steadily worsened. Trocmé began taking in Jews who came to him seeking shelter.

Petaín planned to set up youth camps like those in Germany. But Trocmé and the people of the community rejected the idea. School children handed the German officer who had come to establish the camps a letter from Trocmé. He wrote that there were a number of Jews among them and that the Germans were "not getting them." Enrollment at Trocmé's school had soared from 18 to 350. It wouldn't take a genius to figure out who the extra children were. The activities of Trocmé and the school and town were illegal according to German laws, yet the Germans did nothing.

According to historians, the Huguenots of Le Chambon were descendants of France's original Protestants who had stood up to pressures and survived annihilation in the past. The people had the legacy of their ancestors to draw from. They knew what persecution



was and understood the suffering of the Jews. When Trocmé gave safe haven to Jews, he did not think of the danger involved. The rest of France was collectively shaking in its boots from fear of the Germans. Trocmé and his associates were beyond fear. Trocmé was arrested for a short period. He was told to sign the oath for his release but he refused. He blatantly told his captors that he would continue to defy German regulations. The Germans didn't know what to do with him and eventually released him.

## Analysis

Part three of "David and Goliath" focuses on recognizing limitations. When Mike Reynolds lost his daughter in a strong-arm robbery, he worked toward changing the law so that felons would be incarcerated for longer periods of time. His law was called the Three Strikes Law – as in three strikes and you're out. The third felony violation perpetrated by an individual resulted in a 25-year plus sentence no matter what the felony was.

The law was enacted but since then criminologists have thrown cold water on its effectiveness. Mike had worked hard at getting the law passed because it symbolized justice for his daughter. Mike Reynolds remained obsessed with his daughter's death for the decades following it. Mike Reynolds's obsession with his daughter's murder did not bring her back and kept Mike in a constant state of grief.

By contrast, when Wilma Derksen lost her young daughter in a vicious homicide, she decided she would not become obsessed and controlled by the crime. She mourned her daughter and was devastated by her loss. However, she had to move on so that the crime wouldn't destroy the rest of her family. No one reacts to a tragedy in the same way. By Wilma letting go of her pain and agony, she was able to continue with her life and focus on her family. Mike Reynolds's obsession kept him locked in the past and immobilized by the tragedy.

As the author has done throughout the book, he draws a comparison between the diverse reactions to individuals to the same circumstance. Mike's Goliath was removing criminals from the street – a fruitless pursuit that kept him tied to his tragedy. Wilma defeated her Goliath – she wasn't going to allow the murderer to do any more damage to herself or her family.

## Vocabulary

berserk, mandatory, exonerated, martyrdom, dysfunction, internment, fascist, resplendent



# Important People

## David Boies

David Boies suffered from dyslexia. He couldn't read at all until third grade with only slow progress after that. He never excelled in school and after high school got a job in construction. His wife felt there was a genius beneath his retiring exterior and urged him to continue his education. David chose the University of Redlands, a small school not many people heard of, to begin his college education. He worked hard because he knew he had to and did well. But when he faced a number of courses that required heavy reading in order to finish his degree, he was faced with an almost impossible challenge. David learned that he could apply for law school without an undergraduate degree which is exactly what he did.

There was a lot of reading in law school but Boies was able to find case summaries that enabled him to get through. He was also a good listener in class and retained much of what he heard. He'd been relying on his memory since childhood to get him by so it had become a powerful tool in adulthood. His listening skills were sharpened over the years because he was forced to compensate for his disability. He attended Northwestern Law School initially and later transferred to Yale for his degree.

Boies did not become a corporate lawyer because there would be too many documents to wade through. Instead, he chose to be a litigator and try cases where he had to rely on his memory and quick-thinking ability. Sometimes he stumbled when he had to read something and couldn't make out a word but he learned to overcome those moments and enjoyed a celebrated career. Since his vocabulary rarely measured up to those of his scholarly opponents, Boies was often at the advantage because he talked to the jury in every day words and in a clear manner that they could easily understand. Boies represented Gore in *Bush v. Gore* before the U.S. Supreme Court.

## Jay Frierich

Jay Freireich's father committed suicide when Jay was a young boy. The Freireichs were Hungarian immigrants and were running a restaurant in Chicago just after the 1929 stock market crash. Jay's father was losing his restaurant, had no money and a large family to take care of. It all became too much for him. Jay's mother went to work in a hat factory where she made two cents a hat. An Irish border took care of Jay until he was nine. In Jay's mind, this woman became his real mother. When his mother remarried, she fired the nanny. Jay never forgave her for that.

Jay didn't like his home life, spent his days on the street and began stealing. As an adult, Jay had no idea what his father was like or the name of the Irish maid. His sister and mother had both died. Sadly, he couldn't even recall the name of the woman who he considered his real mother and the only parental figure who loved him.





One of the only men who Jay Freireich could remember from his childhood that was not dirty and in rags was his physician, Dr. Rosenbloom. He came to treat Jay at home for a minor illness. Jay forgot all about his illness; he was mesmerized by the doctor because he was wearing a suit and tie. That image stayed with Jay forever. He dreamed of being like Dr. Rosenbloom. A science teacher in high school encouraged Jay to go to college. He enrolled in the University of Illinois and worked his way through school. He was accepted into the medical school and became a research associate in Boston after his internship.

Jay ultimately became a successful physician but his rugged beginnings impacted him for the rest of his life. He had a volatile temper and no patience. He was relieved of his duties on several occasions because of his aggressive personality. He was scarred in his young years because every human connection he had ended in death or abandonment. In dealing with his patients, he always gave them hope no matter what the prognosis. He remembered when he had no hope. He had seen strife and had struggled in his life but it didn't defeat him. He, in fact, used it to achieve success and help those who had no hope.

## **Vivek Ranadivé**

When Vivek Ranadivé became the coach for Redwood City, his daughter's basketball team, he vowed that his team would play a full-court press in every game. He was from Mumbai and wasn't familiar with basketball. He thought it was a mindless game – one team scores then immediately everyone runs to the other end of the court and the other team scores. He decided it was best to try to keep the other team from making it to their goal. None of his girls were particularly skilled, but Ranadivé's natural instinct to never lose along with his innovative approach to achieving victory over more talented athletes won the day and won a slot in the national championships for the team.

## **Brian Grazer**

Brian Grazer suffered from dyslexia and did poorly in school. In high school, he successfully used the powers of persuasion going one-on-one with teachers to raise his grades. A child who doesn't struggle to learn doesn't have to hone his persuasive abilities but a child like Brian felt he had no choice. Brian became a highly successful producer in Hollywood, a shark tank where most don't survive. Would he have been there without going through the struggles he faced and the victories he enjoyed without having dyslexia? He doesn't think so.

## **Ingvar Kamprad**

Ingvar Kamprad founded IKEA furniture because he saw that a large portion of the cost of furniture was tied up in assembly. As a result, he made furniture that his customers could assemble. When furniture manufacturers in his home country Sweden launched a strike against IKEA because he was impacting their bottom line, he moved his operation



to Poland – an example of his openness to new ideas and methods. He was focused on the goal of producing quality furniture at an affordable cost and ignored the fact that Poland was vulnerable to attack during the Cold War. He displayed his consciousness by delivering for his customer despite the bumps in the road that he encountered.

## **J. T. MacCurdy**

J. T. MacCurdy was a Canadian psychiatrist who wrote a book called “The Structure of Morale.” He studied the stoic reaction that Londoners had during the Nazi bombings in World War II. Everyone had expected panic in the streets, but the British citizens seemed to shrug off the assaults; MacCurdy wanted to know why. He concluded from his study and research that when the bombs fell the population was divided into three groups: those killed; those who had near misses; and, those who experienced “remote misses.” Since the population of London was more than 8 million at the time, the deaths of the 46,000 Brits killed in the bombings did not touch most people. Each time an individual in the “remote miss” group escaped another bomb, they grew more emboldened and confident that they would survive.

## **Wyatt Walker**

Wyatt Walker was an associate of Martin Luther King, Jr. While King was known for his peaceful protests, Walker was a little more volatile and when pushed could resort to violence. He kept a low profile and was rarely seen with King or photographed with him. He was the behind-the-scenes guy who coordinated protests in the Deep South in the fight for Civil Rights.

King had a protest scheduled in Birmingham that wasn't getting much local support. Bull Connor was the public service commissioner, and he was open about his hatred for blacks. Blacks in Birmingham were afraid to march in the protest because they feared repercussions from Connor and his men.

Wyatt loved to taunt and trick Connor every chance he got. Due to the lack of participation, Walker recruited hundreds of black school children to come to the rally to make Connor think that there was more support than there was. Walker knew that Connor was so biased that he looked at all blacks as troublemakers and protestors despite their age.

## **Caroline Sacks**

Caroline Sacks loved science from the time she was a little girl. She chose to attend Brown University after graduation from high school. Her second choice was the University of Maryland. Caroline had always excelled in her classes throughout her school life. However, in her science classes at Brown she was barely keeping up. She had been used to being the smartest kid in class. Her experience at Brown made her believe that she wasn't very smart after all. She wound up dropping science as her





major. Caroline did not do well at Brown because she was at one of the most competitive schools in the world. She was thrown in with advanced and gifted students who had been in similar environments during their entire education. She was a Small Fish in a Big Pond. Had she gone to the University of Maryland, which wasn't nearly as competitive, she would have been a Big Fish in a Small Pond and probably would have attained a science degree. Her experience proved the point that opting for the best school is not always the best choice.

## Édouard Manet

Artist Édouard Manet was a gregarious young man and a member of the Impressionist Movement taking place in the art world of Paris, France, in the late 19th Century. Almost every night he gathered his fellow Impressionist painters at Café Guerois in the Batignolles neighborhood of Paris, France. Manet loved a robust debate and often got into friendly exchanges with Edgar Degas who was his best friend. The Impressionists faced an art world that was traditional in nature and not prepared for the avant garde style of the Impressionists. Their work was largely banned from the Salon, the coveted exhibition that displayed the works of new artists. Manet was able to get one painting through. It was displayed at the Salon exhibit but it brought on guffaws from some patrons and shocked others and was quickly removed before the exhibition ended. The Impressionists eventually opened up their own exhibition which finally let the rest of the world in on their art.

## Lawrence of Arabia

Lawrence of Arabia was a British archeologist who took up the cause of the Arabians in a conflict with Turkey. The Turks had built a train track from Damascus deep into the Hejaz Desert. The British sided with the Arabians who were at war with the Turks and wanted to destroy the tracks. The Turkish forces numbered more than 1,000 well-trained and well-armed soldiers while Lawrence led a pack of 200 Arabs with no training and armed with whatever weapons they could find. The Turks expected to be attacked from the west in Aqaba but instead Lawrence led his band of Arabs through the oppressive desert from the east. In this surprise attack, Lawrence and the Arabs were able to defeat the larger and much more formidable Turkish soldiers.

## Teresa DePrito

Teresa DePrito was the principal of Shepaug Middle School in Connecticut. The area which had largely been a middle class community was changed when very wealthy people discovered the quaint countryside area and began moving in. Middle class people stopped moving into the area because they couldn't afford the housing costs; the class sizes began to decrease at Shepaug. The parents were excited by the trend because it would translate to smaller class sizes. But Teresa knew that small classes



did not mean that children would have a better education. She was aware that in many cases, the integrity of the education is compromised.

## André Trocmé

Andre Trocmé was the pastor of a church in Le Chambon, France. It was under the rule of the dictator of Vichy, who was a Frenchman recruited by the Germans and who adhered to the Nazi laws and policies. When the dictator decreed that all French school children must give the Nazi salute to the French flag each morning, André told the teachers directly that they would not comply with that dictum because it was against their values. André and his wife began harboring Jews who had fled from other parts of Europe and had come to André because they had heard of his largess. When an officer of the German Army visited the town of Chambon to set up Nazi Youth Camps, André handed the officer a letter with this provocative ending: "We have Jews. You're not getting them."

## Harriet Carson

Harriet Carson was a political activist during the British occupation of Northern Ireland. She was an Irish Catholic who was famous for hitting Margaret Thatcher over the head with her purse. During the unrest in 1970, Harriet came striding through the neighborhoods clanging two pot lids together warning that children were locked in their houses without food or milk. The residents weren't allowed to leave their residences because of a curfew established by the British Army. Harriet and other activists stirred the emotions and anger of the women of Belfast. They broke the curfew and defied the British. The women came out in the thousands and marched to the bakery and dairy to get bread and milk for their children.

## Mike Reynolds and Wilma Derksen

Mike Reynolds and Wilma Derksen both lost young daughters in horrific homicides. Mike Reynolds lived in California and was instrumental in having the Three Strikes Law passed. The law required increasing the severity of sentences with each subsequent felony committed by an individual. After the third "strike" the felon got at least 25 years no matter what the crime. Many experts have concluded that the law is not effective. Mike Reynolds has remained obsessed with his daughter's death for decades.

Wilma Derksen lived in Canada. She had a different reaction to her daughter's death. While she was crushed and distraught, she decided that to save her family she had to move on. She was a Mennonite and it was that religion's tenet to forgive and go on with one's life after such a tragedy. She decided that becoming obsessed with her daughter's violent death would destroy her family. It was difficult but she forgave the man. She wasn't going to let the murderer destroy anyone else in her family.



# Objects/Places

## Inverted U-Curve

The author uses the inverted U-curve to illustrate the point at which the amount of money or other resources peaks and begins to have no impact or even a detrimental impact. Teresa DeBrito, the principal of Shepaug Middle School watched as her class sizes decreased each year. While parents were happy with the trend, DeBrito watched the U-curve begin to form and knew that they were heading for a struggle. Lawrence of Arabia defeated a force of 1,200 well-armed soldiers with a band of 200 Arabs who had never fought in a war and grabbed what weapons they could find. On the U-curve, the chances for Turkish victory decreased due to the army's narrow focus and its overabundance of resources.

## The Cognitive Reflection Test

The Cognitive Reflection Test (CRT) was developed by Yale professor Shane Frederick. It measures an individual's ability to understand complexities. Results of these tests correlate closely with IQ tests. The CRT is a difficult test but psychologists Adam Alter and Daniel Oppenheimer found through their research and study that tests scores could be raised by making the test a little bit more difficult. By making the test harder, students focused better to understand the questions.

## Relative Deprivation

The term "relative deprivation" was coined by sociologist Samuel Stouffer during World War II. Stouffer had been commissioned to study the morale and attitudes of American soldiers. He compared a Military Police Unit whose members rarely got promoted with an Air Corps unit which promoted half of its soldiers. The MPs were generally happier and more satisfied with their duties. Since promotions were rare, they celebrated the occasions. By contrast, the Air Corps soldiers were accustomed to promotions and did not celebrate when they occurred. Those awaiting promotion suffered from frustration and fear that they would not be among the 50 percent not promoted. They would feel like losers if they didn't measure up. Stouffer emphasized that it is human nature to compare yourself to the group that you are part of.

## Small Fish-Big Pond

Carol Sacks had always done well in school and was considered the smartest kid in class. She decided to have a career in science and pursued that dream at Brown University. Her second choice had been the University of Maryland but Carol felt that she would have better opportunities for her future career by earning a degree in science from Brown which was one of the top ten schools in the nation.



Carol quickly became dismayed when she began her science classes. She was barely keeping up. Brown is one of the most competitive schools in the world. Her peers at Brown were gifted kids whose entire educational experience had been in similar environments. Although she put all her efforts into the science classes, she finally gave up and changed her major. Carol suffered because she was a Small Fish in a Big Pond. Had she elected to attend the University of Maryland which has an entirely different environment, she would have been a Big Fish in a Small Pond. The author makes the point that opting for the best school is not always the best decision for the student.

## Five Factor Model

Psychologists measure personality through the Five Factor Model: neuroticism, extraversion, openness, conscientiousness and agreeableness. Psychologist Jordan Peterson believes that innovators and revolutionaries are a combination of some of these major traits. A prime example of this type of personality are people who have dyslexia and are forced to develop skills that otherwise might remain untapped. They are misfits and underdogs and are compelled to devise ways to attain their goals using unconventional methods. They draw on the major traits of the Five Factor Model to achieve success.

## Brown University

Carol Sacks decided on Brown University after graduation from high school. She planned to have a career in science. She was convinced that Brown University, one of the top ten schools in the U.S., would assure her of a stellar career in science. However, it wasn't long after she began her college career that she found herself falling behind. Her peers seemed to be doing well. She began to feel dumb – something she'd never experienced before. Carol had always excelled at school, especially at science her favorite subject. Carol was never able to keep up at Brown and dropped science as her major.

Brown University is one of the most competitive schools in the world. The students who excelled there had been in similar highly competitive environments during their pre-college education. Carol had excelled in her classes in middle and high school but her schools did not have advanced curriculum like those at the schools her fellow students at Brown had attended. Carol was a small fish in a big pond. Had she chosen another school, one that was less competitive and "elite," she probably would have done much better and kept science as her major.

## Shepaug Middle School

Shepaug Middle School was located in a quaint rural area of Connecticut. The school had a robust population of children from the middle-class families that lived in the area. When wealthy people began to discover the idyllic countryside they began to move in en masse. Property value went up as costlier houses were built. Middle class families



could no longer consider moving to the area. Shepaug began to lose population resulting in smaller class sizes. The trend was well-received by the wealthy families. It was conventional wisdom that children benefited from smaller class sizes. However, that is a generally not the case. As the principal watched the class sizes go down each year, she knew that the children would not benefit from the decreasing student population but in fact would suffer.

## Desirable Difficulties

Just like lemonade can be made from lemons, there are some difficulties encountered in life that in the long run can turn out to be a positive force, or desirable. A child is devastated by the loss or abandonment of a parent. Children who suffer from dyslexia struggle to achieve and survive their childhood. But hardships such as these can result in phenomenal success in adulthood. Twelve of the 44 presidents lost their fathers in their youth. Sixty-seven percent of British prime ministers lost a parent before age 16. Einstein was suspected of having dyslexia as does Richard Branson, Charles Schwab, and John Chambers, CEO of Cisco. “Gifted children and child prodigies seem most likely to emerge in highly supportive family conditions. In contrast, geniuses have a perverse tendency of growing up in more adverse conditions.” (142)

## Project C

Wyatt Walker, an associate of Martin Luther King, Jr., helped stage civil rights protests and marches in the Deep South. The plan for the Birmingham protest was called Project C – “c” for confrontation. Project C was comprised of three acts with each one building and becoming more provocative than the prior phase. Act 1 called for planned sit-ins at local restaurants; Act 2 was the boycott of all downtown Birmingham businesses; and Act 3 was the staging of mass marches designed to fill up the jails in Birmingham. The overarching purpose of the three acts of Project C was to gain national attention and place focus on the oppression that blacks were suffering under in the Deep South.

## Le Chambon

During the Nazi occupation of France, the Germans allowed the Vichy region to be ruled by a French man, Marshal Philippe Pétain, who became the dictator of Vichy and who vowed to be in complete compliance with Nazi policies and laws. Most towns in the area were in compliance, but there was one glaring exception. The town of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon completely defied the dictator and refused to adhere to Nazi laws. Led by Pastor André Trocmé, the town refused to have their kids give the French flag the Nazi salute each morning. The most startling defiance of the Germans was Andre’s providing safe harbor to terrified Jews, an offense that called for execution. In a note he passed to a German officer, he ended his message with a terse comment: “We have Jews. You’re not getting them.” (267)

# Themes

## Dyslexia

There is a physical difference in the brain of those who have the condition known as dyslexia. Imaging shows that they actually have less gray matter and fewer cells in certain areas of the brain. This dysfunction is caused by misfiring neurons occurring sometime during fetal development. People with this condition typically have difficulty reading because they depend disproportionately on the right hemisphere of their brain, rather than on the balanced use of the brain of the normal reader.

While parents of a dyslexic child often suspect a learning abnormality, once the child is in school his difficulty in reading quickly leads to a diagnosis of dyslexia. Dyslexics don't see words backwards; the process of identifying words takes them longer. Dyslexics have learning issues because they don't absorb what they read because of the inordinate time it takes to identify words. Diagnoses are typically made by the time a child is eight or nine. By then the child has already suffered from years of humiliation and frustration which can cause serious psychological problems including depression and low self-esteem.

There are many successful individuals who have the condition including Richard Branson, billionaire entrepreneur, Charles Schwab, founder of the Schwab brokerage concern and John Chambers, CEO of Cisco to name a few. There are two explanations for the success of these leaders: they're so brilliant and innovative that nothing could stop them, or they succeeded because of their disorder and the struggles they faced in pursuing their goals. Dyslexic individuals who have achieved great success understand the role that their disorder played in their lives and pursuits. However, due to the suffering and isolation that the condition causes especially at a young age none of them would wish the disorder on anyone.

## Childhood Adversity and Success

Being abandoned by a parent or the death of a parent are arguably the most devastating events that a child can be faced with. But as sad and painful as these losses are, they can be used for a force of good. A privileged child who wants for nothing and experiences no grand tragedy, doesn't learn to face challenges or cope with adversity. There are strengths within such a child that remain untapped into adulthood. While a child would never choose the tragedy of loss, the pain and struggle that the child must work through makes him stronger.

Jay Freireich's father committed suicide and he lost his nanny, the only person he ever loved as a child. His mother was cold and bitter and had abandoned him emotionally. He started to go down the wrong path – stealing and doing badly at school. Despite these rough times there was a spirit within him, something that pulled him through. He





was astonished when a doctor visited him in his sick bed wearing a suit and tie. The image of that erudite man dressed to the nines became indelibly embedded in his mind. He wanted to climb out of the morass and be like the man in the suit and tie. No one would have imagined that Jay would become a renowned physician. His childhood adversities helped him attain great success.

In the early 60s, psychologist Marvin Eisenstadt made a connection between artists and creative people with the loss of a parent in early life. Eisenstadt compiled a list of 699 of individuals who had achieved great successes. Eisenstadt was committed to the project and dedicated 10 years of his life in pursuit of the answers he sought. Eisenstadt's study revealed that a fourth of those people he identified had lost a parent before the age of ten. By the age of 20, 45% of the group had lost a parent.

Historian Lucille Iremonger did a similar study of British prime ministers and found that 67% of the prime ministers lost a parent before the age of 16. The same can be found among U.S. Presidents, from Washington to Obama, 12 had lost a parent while they were young. Losing a parent is a devastating occurrence in the life of a child but "... a virtue can be made of necessity."

## Thinking Outside the Box

Jay Frierich took a position at the National Cancer Institute in 1955. He was assigned to the children's leukemia ward. The children bled from every orifice of their bodies. There was blood everywhere. They couldn't eat or drink because there was blood in their mouths and throats. Everyone dreaded being assigned there except Jay. He decided the kids were worth fighting for. He figured out that the children were bleeding because they weren't producing sufficient platelets. He devised a method using silicon needles and plastic bags to use in drawing blood from volunteers. Platelets didn't stick to the silicon and plastic, and therefore the children received the crucial platelets they needed.

Jay's innovation stopped the excessive bleeding and allowed the underlying disease to be treated. Jay had the courage to face the horror of the bleeding children because he'd been through tough times in his own life, particularly in his childhood when he was abandoned physically and emotionally.

After solving the excessive bleeding problem, Jay didn't turn his back on the suffering kids of the leukemia ward; he was instrumental in innovating a new way to treat the disease. Jay and a colleague, Dr. Emil "Tom" Frei, made monumental advancements in treating childhood leukemia with a new drug from the periwinkle plant called vincristine. They devised a plan to use the new drug in combination with other anti-cancer drugs. Max Wintrobe, the world-famous hematologist held out no hope for children stricken with leukemia and had basically given them up for dead. But Jay and Frei were not deterred. Although it was a fight to get approval to experiment on the children with their "drug cocktail" Frierich and Frei were finally successful. Cancer is now treated with drug cocktails like the ones that Jay and Frei developed.



## Bucking the System

Many people are faced with following traditional standards or stepping out beyond such perceived limitations. During the Impressionist Movement in Paris in the late 19th Century, the epitome of success for a painter, especially a new artist, was to have his paintings hung in the Salon exhibition. At the time, the French government had control over artists in the form of regulated standards. All aspiring artists were placed on a governmental program. When it was obvious that an artist was not measuring up to the elite standards established by the government, the artist was basically thrown out of the program and would no longer be considered an artist. The goal of all young and upcoming artists was to have their paintings displayed in the Salon.

Édouard Manet was an Impressionist artist who often met with other young Impressionist painters like Cezanne, Monet, Renoir and Pissarro among others. These artists were frequently and roundly criticized by the top art critics of the day. Their brush strokes were visible, their subjects were ordinary people not soldiers and other important people, the people and buildings in their works were indistinct and blurry. The Impressionists were considered no-talent wannabes. Manet was able to get one of his paintings in the Salon exhibition but it was literally laughed out of the building. They removed the painting before the exhibition ended.

The Impressionists were dismayed by their lack of success. They believed in their work and wanted to get it out there and have it be seen. They were faced with two choices: go along with the critics and change their style to conform with tradition or organize their own exhibition. It was a risky proposition but the artists could not abandon their art. They opened their own exhibition and displayed their works.

Their exhibition didn't get the million visitors that the Salon did but 3,500 people viewed the works of the Impressionists and word began to spread. Had they not followed their heart and bucked authority, the world would have lost some of the greatest art ever to be created. It is estimated that the art that was shown in the Impressionists' exhibition would be worth over a billion dollars in today's money. Those works now hang in all the finest museums across the globe.

## Outsmarting An Unfair Authority

Wyatt Walker was an associate of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and organized protests for the civil rights leader. African Americans had long dreamed of being free and rising above their white masters. Through their struggles they were taught the art of survival and through stories about "trickster heroes" they learned about defeating their oppressor through their wits. These parables originated in Africa and demonstrated as well as any other piece of art or literature that the weak can defeat the strong, the powerless can be victorious over unfair authority and those perceived to be "dumb" can outsmart those who think they're smarter.





One shining example that is portrayed in the section about Walker is the story of Brer Rabbit who had been trapped by Brer Fox. Brer Fox built a baby out of tar and when Brer Rabbit tried to engage with it, he got stuck in the tar and was trapped. Brer Rabbit begged Brer Fox not to throw him in the briar patch. His pleas convinced Brer Fox that being thrown into the briar patch was a fate worse than being Brer Fox's dinner.

Brer Fox took great joy in doing exactly what Brer Rabbit didn't want him to do and tossed him in the briar patch. But Brer Rabbit had tricked and outsmarted Brer Fox. Brer Rabbit had grown up there and was able to use the thorns in the briar patch to free himself.

Tales like this gave southern blacks the hopes and dreams that they could outsmart their slave masters and after the Civil War, the strident segregationists that were making their lives miserable. Brer Rabbit knew the briar patch and he knew Brer Fox better than Brer Fox knew him. The trickster is at the advantage because he has nothing to lose. Wyatt Walker goaded Bull Connor into unleashing police dogs on the protestors. The AP captured the photo of a K9 attacking a well-dressed young black man who just stood there and took it. The photo was seen around the country and brought the focus that the civil rights movement needed in order to make progress. Wyatt had prayed, "Please Brer Connor, please. Whatever you do, don't throw me in the briar patch." The "briar patch" was the unleashing of the dogs

The author also mentions the parable of the Tortoise and the Hare another of the southern black's trickster hero tales. It proves the point that when the rules are the same for everyone and don't change mid-stream that the race is fair and that everyone's efforts are rewarded. The trickster is not a trickster by necessity. He is a trickster out of necessity.



# Styles

## Structure

“David and Goliath, Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of Battling Giants” by Malcolm Gladwell is a non-fiction book that makes the case for the defeat of the strong by the weak which is readily reflected in the title. The book is filled with anecdotes and references to analytical studies and research. The book is broken up into three main sections: Part One: The Advantages of Disadvantages (And the Disadvantages of Advantages); Part Two: The Theory of Desirable Difficulty; and, Part Three: The Limits of Power. Each section is separated into three chapters.

There are graphic representations of charts that contain the inverted U-curve which basically demonstrates the law of diminishing returns. If too many resources are focused on one entity at a certain point, the influx of extra money or people or other resources has little or no impact. In fact, in some cases the inverted U-curve demonstrates that resource overload can have a detrimental impact on the subject matter of the chart.

There are also a number of charts with comparative statistics prepared by Mitchell Chang of the University of California that indicate a direct correlation between SAT scores and the completion of a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) degree. Surprisingly, with every 10 point decrease in SAT scores, the likelihood of someone attaining a STEM degree increases by two percent. Go figure.

The last section is followed by “Acknowledgments,” “Notes” and an “Index.”

## Perspective

“David and Goliath” by Malcolm Gladwell makes the case for the misfit and the underdog. It is written from the perspective of the author who bases his findings on the vast research he has conducted on the subject of the weak versus the powerful. He cites many cases in which the downtrodden are victorious over those in positions of power and authority. However, just as David could not begin to beat Goliath in strength and size, the people that Gladwell writes about all thought outside the box and devised innovative approaches to the challenges that they faced and for the victories that they achieved.

Gladwell is an author, reporter and writer for the New York Magazine. He approaches the subject matter as a reporter who gathers facts and presents them to the reader. While he is making the case for the underdog and the disadvantaged, he frequently acknowledges that not every underdog is able to emerge and achieve his goals. The individuals that he writes about had learned from taking on the challenge of impossible odds and turned that knowledge into strength. He cites many examples of how adversity



can produce strong people who are not only able to survive but achieve successes beyond anyone's imagination.

Gladwell taps the wisdom and voices of scholars, historians, psychologists and other experts to make the case for the victory of the misfit and the underdog. History is dotted with misfits who out performed expectations – from famed French Impressionist painters to a British billionaire entrepreneur, to a celebrated attorney who battled the U.S. Supreme Court in deciding the presidency.

## Tone

“David and Goliath” was written by Malcolm Gladwell who is a reporter and opinion writer for the New Yorker Magazine. The book is written in a factual manner much as would be expected by a professional journalist. Gladwell makes his conclusions relying on his own extensive information gathering and studies and research conducted by scholars, psychologists, historians and other experts.

In addition to statistics and research results, Gladwell provides anecdotal evidence to make his case. Gladwell relates many examples of the underdog or misfit actually being at an advantage over the powerful and those in authority despite his obvious shortcomings and the unique challenges he faces. By doing so he presents a whole new perspective on the weak versus the strong. Gladwell gives new hope to kids with problems and issues that render them “different” and their parents who suffer along with them.

Gladwell takes a balanced approach to the topic. He cites many instances of successful people who had difficult childhoods and suffered through debilitating conditions such as dyslexia. However, he frequently remarks that not all people who struggled as children emerge with great successes. Gladwell is the author of several of bestselling books including “Outliers” which examines why some people achieve extraordinary success. In “David and Goliath” Gladwell mimics that theme altering it to discover the reasons why underdogs can achieve great successes.



## Quotes

Ranadivé coached a team of girls who had no talent in a sport he knew nothing about. He was an underdog and a misfit, and that gave him the freedom to try things no one else even dreamed of.

-- Author (Chapter 1 paragraph Page 37)

**Importance:** The author is making his fundamental thesis – that being a misfit or underdog frees a person of the restrictions imposed upon them by experience and training. The person can think outside the box for an innovative way to achieve success.

When there are too few students in a room, the chances that children are surrounded by a critical mass of other people like them start to get really low. Taken too far, class-size reduction steals away the peers that struggling students learn from.

-- Jesse Levin (Chapter 2 paragraph Page 59)

**Importance:** This is an excerpt from economist's Jesse Levin's work on academic performance. It captures one of the reasons that small class size is not always a benefit.

I wanted to have more freedom. I wanted to aspire to have different things. Money was a tool that I could use for my aspiration and my desires and my drive. Nobody taught me that. I learned it. It was kind of like trial and error. I liked the juice of it. I got some self-esteem from it. I felt more control over my life.

-- Unnamed Hollywood Executive (Chapter 2 paragraph Page 47)

**Importance:** The author is making the point that a young person who has to earn his own money and work his way up becomes strong and independent. A youth who is given everything has never fought that battle and when he becomes an adult, he has no skills to make it on his own.

... What is learned out of necessity is inevitably more powerful than the learning that comes easily.

-- Author (Chapter 4 paragraph Page 113)

**Importance:** The author makes the point that a learning disability like dyslexia can actually be turned into a strength because the pathway to knowledge is hard-earned.

Dyslexia – in the best of cases – forces you to develop skills that might otherwise have lain dormant. It also forces you to do things that you might otherwise never have considered...

-- Author (Chapter 4 paragraph Page 124)

**Importance:** The author makes the point that you can make lemonade out of lemons. Highly intelligent people have dyslexia. When they learn the best ways for them to deal with the condition, there is no stopping them.



Being bombed or orphaned can be a near-miss experience and leave you devastated. Or it can be a remote miss and leave you stronger.  
-- Author (Chapter 6 paragraph Page 172)

**Importance:** A near-miss experience is a close call. A remote miss is one that is observable and touches one's life, yet it is distant and remote. The people of London surprised the government by not be overly panicked during the German blitz. It was later determined that most people were only mildly impacted by the bombing. Each time a person was unharmed during a bombing emboldened him.

Influencing popular behavior requires neither sympathy nor mysticism, but rather a better understanding of what costs and benefits the individual or the group is concerned with, and how they are calculated.  
-- Excerpt from "Rebellion and Authority" by Leites and Wolf (Chapter 7 paragraph Page 201)

**Importance:** The authors of the book that was popular in the 1970s stresses that authority is all-powerful particularly when understanding the weakness of the oppressed.

I know sometimes you can hate the police. I understand all that. But I just want you to know, as much as it seems that we're harassing you by knocking on your door, we really do care, and we really do want you to have a happy Thanksgiving.  
-- Chief Joanne Jaffe (Chapter 7 paragraph Page 214)

**Importance:** Chief Jaffe headed the Housing Bureau of the NYC Police Department. She and her task force delivered turkeys to the families of the juvenile delinquents that they'd been reaching out to in effort to turn their lives around. Giving the families turkeys was an act of good faith that Jaffe hoped would have lasting impact.

Everyone once in a while during the course of your life, you might have an opportunity to save somebody else's life. You know pull 'em out of a burning building, rescue 'em from drowning or some other crazy things. But how many people get a chance to save six people's lives each and every day?  
-- Mike Reynolds (Chapter 8 paragraph Page 237)

**Importance:** After Mike Reynolds's daughter was murdered in a robbery, he formed a group of concerned citizens and wrote a new law called the Three Strikes Law. Mandatory sentencing required that each time a person was convicted of a felony, his sentence would become harsher. For a third offense, the sentence was 25 years to life. After the law was instituted, it cut murder down in California from 12 to 6 a day.

A man employs the full power of the state in his grief and ends up plunging his government into a fruitless and costly experiment. A woman who walks away from the promise of power finds the strength to forgive – and saves her friendship, her marriage and her sanity. The world is turned upside down.  
-- Author (Chapter 8 paragraph Page 262)



**Importance:** Mike Reynolds' grief over his murdered daughter compelled him to create a new law to reduce crime. However, it did not have the anticipated impact and was ineffective. Wilma Derksen chose to forgive the killer of her daughter. She knew that becoming obsessed with the murder would ruin her life which would not bring her daughter back.

Loving, forgiving, and doing good to our adversaries is our duty. Yet we must do this without giving up, and without being cowardly. We shall resist whenever our adversaries demand of us obedience contrary to the orders of the Gospel. We shall do so without fear, but also without price and without hate.

-- André Trocmé (Chapter 9 paragraph Page 264)

**Importance:** André Trocmé was a pastor in one of the villages that was under the rule of the dictator of Vichy during World War II. He was a pacifist and didn't believe in violence; however, he was unwilling to compromise his beliefs to avoid confrontation.

We have Jews. You're not getting them.

-- André Trocmé (Chapter 9 paragraph Page 267)

**Importance:** This quote captures André Trocmé's stance on the Jews he was sheltering during World War II. He was a pacifist pastor who loved his enemy but he loved his principles and values more. The quote was part of a letter that French school children handed to a German officer who had come to set up Nazi youth camps in the region.



# Topics for Discussion

## Topic 1

What assumption did the Turks make about an impending attack from Lawrence of Arabia and his band of Arabs? How were Lawrence and the Arabs underdogs and what made the Turks appear to be superior?

## Topic 2

How is having wealth an advantage for parents raising children? How is it a detriment? What does a child learn from having to struggle?

## Topic 3

What did the Salon mean to the French Impressionists of the late 19th Century? How did critics view the work of these men at the time? What choices faced the Impressionists regarding their art and getting notice for it?

## Topic 4

What does it mean to be a big fish in a little pond or a little fish in a big pond? What are the advantages and disadvantages for an average student to attend an elite school?

## Topic 5

Provide examples of “desirable difficulties.” In what instances could having dyslexia be considered a desirable difficulty?

## Topic 6

What reaction did the British government expect the people of London would have once Germany began bombing the city? What reaction did the majority of the people have and why? What is a “near miss” and a “remote miss?”

## Topic 7

What theory did Charles Wolf, Jr. present in his book, “Rebellion and Authority?” Describe what has been proven right or wrong about his theory and supporting provide examples.



## Topic 8

Describe how Chief Jaffe used her authority in the right way. How did she blend threats of incarceration with a serious effort to reach out to the young boys in the Brownsville projects who were drifting into crime?

## Topic 9

Explain what the Three Strikes Law is and what spurred its passage. What are the pros and cons of this law and why?

## Topic 10

How did André Trocmé and the township of Le Chambon defy the Nazis? Why didn't the German Army have a harsh response to their defiance? What did Trocmé mean when he wrote to the Germans that, "We have Jews. You're not getting them?"