

*Outliers*

by Malcolm Gladwell

Little Brown, 2008, 299 pgs.

Review by David Eaton Mauk

The essence of Malcolm Gladwell's excellent new book is that there is more, much more, that make people who they are as adults than the factors of nature and nurture. He turns an anthropological-like lens on the critical outcome of success in *Outliers*, his third book that began with the smash hit, *The Tipping Point*.

Gladwell explores common denominators in the success of The Beatles, Bill Gates, a Silicon Valley hi-tech guru, Wall Street lawyers and others. Through these case histories a thesis emerges for their success that goes beyond the innate characteristics of talent, ambition and ability. We are presented with the idea of how chance, clan, culture and commitment create a formula of sorts in forming individual success. How it makes a difference what town we are from. Even the town of our ancestors. Who one's friends and family are. And, the significance of lucky breaks, including the paradox of appearing much the opposite at the time of their occurrence. The examples of Jewish immigrants arriving penniless in a WASP dominated New York City, where their legacy as garment workers set the stage for the success of their offspring in the shifting paradigm of post war commerce.

The book somewhat unfolds like a whodunit as readers learn clues about specific traits of those Jewish garment workers, Southeast Asian rice farmers, airlines pilots from particular cultures, and a mixed race family from Jamaica. Gladwell connects the complexity of dots that tie them together, along with our Pacific Northwest icon, Bill Gates. One of the mysteries that is solved is the importance of logging 10,000 hours in the development of one's skill on the road to success.

*Outliers* is a compelling, highly readable book. I found myself wanting more case histories and at least one woman whose life story was revealed alongside the men about whom we learn. The book provides insight into questions we are likely unaware of, due to lacking the knowledge of the layers as they are peeled away in the lives examined by this story of success.

Along the way, readers will become more acquainted with the term "outliers," adding personal definitions to the use framed by the book's title. Like the author's two previous volumes, you will likely have new words and ideas on which to contemplate and filter your own life experiences.