

# David And Goliath

Malcolm Gladwell

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## Overview

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Malcolm Gladwell's 2013 book *David and Goliath: Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of Battling Giants* is an investigation of the relationship—often distorted, in Gladwell's view—between underdogs and giants. Taken from the Biblical account of David and Goliath, underdogs are cast as those battling (and overcoming) seemingly overwhelming odds, and giants are their adversaries. *David and Goliath* was a bestseller, but some critics and scholars found Gladwell's conclusions unsatisfying and the stories he draws from unsubstantiated.

The book unfolds over three parts. Part 1, "The Advantage of Disadvantages (and the Disadvantages of Advantages)," is an investigation of how the very things that appear to make an enemy strong—this can be a person, a corporation, a belief system, an army, etc.—may actually be weaknesses. Apparent strengths can be exploited and revealed as vulnerabilities. Gladwell makes his argument using the stories of Vivek Ranadivé, Teresa DeBrito, and Caroline Sacks.

Vivek Ranadivé, despite having no experience coaching or playing basketball, was able to institute an unorthodox approach—full court pressure, all the time—to his daughter's team, eventually helping them reach the Nationals level of competition. Teresa DeBrito is the principal at a middle school whose students appear to suffer academically as class sizes grow small, which runs counter to the intuition that a smaller class allows a more intimate relationship with—and extra attention from—the teacher. Caroline Sacks chooses an elite Ivy League university for her science degree, but eventually leaves science entirely. She cannot help but measure herself against the other elite students, which damages her confidence in a way that a smaller university might not have. At a different institution, she could have been the top student.

Part 2, "The Theory of Desirable Difficulty," introduces the idea that there are some weaknesses that force people to improve in a way that others who do not share the apparent weakness cannot access. Gladwell demonstrates the theory with the stories of David Boies, Emil Freireich, and Wyatt Walker. Boies is a dyslexic man who nevertheless became a powerful lawyer. Gladwell posits that his dyslexia was an advantage because it forced Boies to focus on his powers of memorization, persuasion, and adaptability, which are sometimes of more use to a trial lawyer than the ability to dissect the minutiae of contracts and legal briefs. Emil Freireich was a doctor who had a tumultuous childhood but overcame his fears in order to develop innovative treatments for children with leukemia. Wyatt Walker was one of Martin Luther King Jr.'s chief strategists during the dramatic protests in the South during the height of the civil rights movement. Walker was forced to use tricks of deception and misdirection in order to gain traction for the movement, employing strategies similar to the trickster heroes of folk tales. He turned their weakness in numbers into a need for cunning.

In Part 3, "The Limits of Power," Gladwell presents the theory that a misunderstanding of what power can achieve can weaken those in power. He gives the cases of Rosemary Lawlor, Mike Reynolds, Wilma Derksen, and André Trocmé as examples. In the 1970s, Lawlor was a young newlywed and mother during the conflicts in Northern Ireland. She witnessed firsthand how the mismanagement of the British Army—sent in to preserve order—worsened the situation and the violence. Mike Reynolds helped institute the Three Strikes law for criminals in California, after his daughter was murdered, which appeared to lower crime. Wilma Derksen also lost a daughter to a murderer, but chose to forgive him instead of seeking retribution and justice. André Trocmé was a pastor in World War II France who never made a secret of hiding Jews and defying the Nazis publicly at every opportunity. In each case, those in possession of power are unable to wield it for their desired results.

# Chapter Summaries & Analyses

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## Part 1

### Part 1: “The Advantages of Disadvantages (and the Disadvantages of Advantages)”

#### Part 1, Introduction Summary: “Goliath”

Gladwell introduces the story of David and Goliath. The Israelites and Philistines had been at war and were deadlocked. The Philistines sent the giant Goliath as their champion. If he could beat the champion of the Israelites in combat, Israel would surrender and become slaves. A young boy named David agreed to fight Goliath even though the other warriors were terrified of the giant’s size and strength. The primary idea of Gladwell’s project is this: “*David and Goliath* is a book about what happens when ordinary people confront giants. By ‘giants,’ I mean powerful opponents of all kinds” (5). Each chapter will tell the story of a person who faced a Goliath.

There are two central ideas. The first is that “the act of facing overwhelming odds produces greatness and beauty” (5). The second is that these conflicts are frequently misinterpreted, so the lessons they could teach are often lost. The book serves as a guide to facing giants and thereby gaining a more accurate understanding of strengths and weaknesses.

Goliath expected the battle to be fought on his own terms. He prepared for another warrior like himself, adorning himself in heavy armor and carrying a sword and spear. When Saul sees this, he asks David to wear his armor, but David knows that heavy armor will slow him down. Instead, he gathers a few stones, puts one in a sling, and strikes Goliath in the head, knocking him down. David grabs the giant’s sword and decapitates him. Gladwell states that interpreting this story as a metaphor for an improbable victory is wrong.

Soldiers who used slings in combat were known as practicing projectile fighting: “In experienced hands, the sling was a devastating weapon. Paintings from medieval times show slingers hitting birds in mid-flight” (9). Goliath was a member of the heavy infantry, expecting to fight another heavy infantryman. David was skilled in the sling because he had to fight predators from a distance while trying to protect his flocks from them. He intended to fight Goliath in the same way, which neither Goliath nor Saul anticipated: “Goliath had as much chance against David, the historian Robert Dohrenwend writes, ‘as any Bronze Age warrior would have had against an opponent armed with a .45 automatic pistol’” (12).

Gladwell asks why the story is so misunderstood, and answers that it is partly from a misunderstanding of power, as well as a narrow definition of it. He cites evidence that Goliath may have had a pituitary condition that accounted for his size and damaged his vision, both which caused him to move slowly: “There is an important lesson in all battles with giants. The powerful and the strong are not always what they seem” (14).

#### Part 1, Chapter 1 Summary: “Vivek Ranadivé”

Gladwell introduces Vivek Ranadivé, who committed to two principles when he decided to coach his daughter’s basketball team: he would never raise his voice, and his team would play a full-court press during every moment of

every game when they did not have the ball. His team was full of girls (including his daughter, Anjali) who had never played basketball before, and he had never coached. But his intuition about the full-court press—referring to pressuring the other team for the entire length of the court, rather than letting them dribble down easily to where the defenders were waiting—was insightful. His team went to the national championships, and his daughter remarked on the success: “It was really random. I mean, my father had never played basketball before” (20).

Gladwell then asks the reader to add up the wars fought over the past 200 years as long as they were fought between large and small countries. He provides statistics showing that “just under a third of the time, the weaker country wins” (21). When a weaker country uses unorthodox tactics, as David did, the win rate reaches to “63.6 percent” (21). If this is true, then underdogs win more often than might be assumed, and the outcome of the David and Goliath story should not be shocking.

The story of T.E. Lawrence—popularly known as Lawrence of Arabia—is presented. Lawrence led the Arab revolt against the Turkish army as World War I was ending. Lawrence’s troops were untrained and unskilled. Many had never fired a gun. But they were able to travel lightly through the desert and were skilled at finding water, so they rarely needed to carry the extra pounds water containers would have required. Lawrence was skilled at surprising enemy forces and attacking from unexpected directions. During a pivotal battle, his tough, mobile men were able to kill or capture 1,200 Turks while losing only two men. Their secret was coming at the Turks from directly out of the desert, which no one could have anticipated and so had not planned for: “Movement, endurance, individual intelligence, knowledge of the country—and courage—which Lawrence’s men had in abundance—allowed them to do the impossible” (24). However, Gladwell asks why it was thought to be impossible. The Arab force had advantages, they just were not as heavily armed or trained as the Turks: “We have, I think, a very rigid and limited definition of what an advantage is” (25).

Gladwell returns to the Ranadivé story. Because he had never coached, he hired two experts to help him instruct his Redwood City team: Robert Craig and his daughter Rometra, who had played college basketball. One of his strategies was to make inbounding the ball difficult. After a basket, a team has five seconds to inbound the ball. Typically the other team goes to the other end of the court and waits. Ranadivé had his players pressure the inbound passes and were often able to prevent the pass from being made within five seconds, thereby getting possession of the ball. When the other teams managed to inbound the ball, Ranadivé instituted similar pressure during the 10 seconds a team has to get the ball across the half court line before a penalty. Because they were often able to steal the ball shortly after an inbound, they found themselves already near the opponents’ basket, which gave them access to easier shots. The team used the same strategy as Lawrence did in his war with the Turks: he attacked the other teams where they were vulnerable.

Gladwell continues with the example of basketball: “In January of 1971, the Fordham University Rams played a basketball game against the University of Massachusetts Redmen” (29). The Redmen had not lost a game in over two years. UMass was a highly skilled team featuring Julius Erving, who would later be known as Dr. J in the NBA. Fordham was not as good and their tallest player was only 6’5”, but they were tough and inexhaustible. Their weapon was the same full court press that the Redwood City girls’ team would use later under Ranadivé. Gladwell asks why every team doesn’t use the strategy if the press is so effective: “All an opposing team had to do to beat Redwood City was press back. The girls were not good enough to handle a taste of their own medicine” (31).

When an underdog employs an unorthodox strategy like David, their chances of winning increase greatly: “But most of the time, underdogs didn’t fight like David” (31). Gladwell suggests that one of the reasons why an underdog’s

strategy is not often used is because it is typically hard and exhausting. One of the players on the UMass team during that fateful game was Rick Pitino, who would later become a college basketball coach famous for his use of the press. His team became the epitome of one of Gladwell's principles: "To play by David's rules you have to be desperate. You have to be so *bad* that you have no other choice" (33).

Other coaches were angry at Redwood City when their strategy became apparent and they started winning games. Their issue was that all of the girls on the teams were beginners, and they were not learning rudimentary basketball skills, which should have been the priority at that age and stage of development: "When the game becomes about effort over ability, it become unrecognizable: a shocking mixture of broken plays and flailing limbs and usually competent players panicking" (35).

When they played at Nationals, the Redwood City girls won two games, and then, in the third, ran into an unsympathetic referee who did not like their style. He began calling constant fouls when they would execute the full court press. Eventually, all of Ranadivé's players were in danger of fouling out, and he had to stop the press: "They played basketball the way basketball is supposed to be played and in the end they lost—but not before proving that Goliath is not the giant he thinks he is" (37).

## Part 1, Chapter 2 Summary: "Teresa DeBrito"

In Chapters 2 and 3, Gladwell applies two questions regarding advantages and disadvantages to education. The first involves Shepaug Middle School. It was initially a crowded school, but various factors in the economy and development of the community eventually led to a drastic decrease in class size, which provided a more intimate experience. Gladwell asks the reader if this sounds like a school they would want to send their children to, and it is clear that the obvious answer is yes: "Virtually everywhere in the world, parents and policymakers take it for granted that smaller classes are better classes" (40).

At Shepaug Valley, the class size is sometimes as low as 15. Students get more private attention from their teachers, and it is logical to assume that they should be doing better than when Shepaug was crowded: "It turns out that there is a very elegant way to test whether this is true" (40). An economist named Caroline Hoxby studied the Shepaug situation along with similar schools in Connecticut. After studying class sizes and academic performance, she determined that, based on the data, class size has no statistically significant effect on performance. Across hundreds of other studies done since Hoxby's initial observations, it is shown that "[f]ifteen percent find statistically significant evidence that students do better in small classes" (42). An almost identical amount appears to do worse in small classes. Twenty percent seem to have no effect: "The evidence suggests that the thing we are convinced is such a big advantage might not be such an advantage after all" (44).

Gladwell recounts a conversation with "one of the most powerful people in Hollywood" (44). As a 10-year-old in Minneapolis, he began running a snow-clearing business in which he managed and paid other children. In college, he started and oversaw a laundry service. After graduating from a New York law school he went to Hollywood. He was promoted rapidly through a succession of lucrative jobs and, at the time of Gladwell's conversation with him, is at the height of his powers and riches. He says that what drove him to work so hard was a desire for more freedom.

The man recognizes that there is a contradiction when he discusses his love for his children. Because he is rich, his children will not have to learn the same lessons of hard work and self-created independence that he learned. He says that people can be "ruined by wealth because they lose their ambition and they lose their pride and they lose their

sense of self-worth" (47). The man from Hollywood says that he might have less success raising his children as a multimillionaire than his own father had raising him in Minneapolis where they had to be frugal.

Gladwell introduces the principle that "more money is not always better" (48). Poverty makes parenting harder. If a parent has to work so much to pay the bills that there is little or no time to spend with the children, this is not ideal: "Money makes parenting easier until a certain point—when it stops making much of a difference" (49). Happiness researchers have posited that after someone is making \$75,000 every year, diminishing returns begin to appear. A psychologist named James Grubman frames the challenges of parenting and money as an issue of setting limits. A poor child will stop asking for a pony if he understands that a new pony simply can't happen due to lack of money. But a rich parent who tells their children that they can't have a pony has to say, in Grubman's formulation, "I won't" instead of "I can't" (50). It is harder to say "I won't."

Gladwell returns to the discussion of class size and introduces Teresa DeBrito, the principal of Shepaug Valley Middle School. DeBrito is concerned about the falling class sizes and what they might mean for the performance of the students. Gladwell returns to Hoxby's observations and asks: "Why isn't there much of a difference between a class of twenty-five students and a class of eighteen students?" (55). Smaller classes are easier for teachers but would also require instructors to alter their teaching style to help smaller classes, rather than simply seeing it as an opportunity to have a lower workload and fewer assignments to grade: "The evidence suggests that teachers don't necessarily do that. They just work less. This is only human nature" (55).

Gladwell asks what he considers to be the crucial question: "Can a class be *too* small, the same way a parent can have *too* much money?" (56). After polling teachers in Canada and the United States, he states that the answer is yes. A smaller class presents unique challenges, such as creating an environment in which every student feels more exposed and easier for bullies to find. Teachers of small classes have to now deal with the potential intensity of interactions rather than the sheer number of interactions. Gladwell quotes a teacher as saying: "The students start acting like siblings in the backseat of your car. There is simply no way for the cantankerous kids to get away from one another" (57).

Another teacher describes the problem as being one of discussion: "If the numbers get too low, discussion suffers" (57). In a large class, the chances of someone being willing to start a discussion are higher. Small groups can suffer from a lack of energy that is often useful to start a conversation or debate. An economist named Jesse Levin says that students learn not just from the teacher, but from one another; fewer students means fewer opportunities to learn.

These are the reasons that worry DeBrito when she thinks about the future of Shepaug Valley. She had been a math teacher and says that her favorite class had 29 students. It was difficult, but stimulating. But she also admits that 29 is not an ideal number for Shepaug Valley classes, and that not every teacher feels as she does.

Gladwell turns to a nearby, premier boarding school call Hotchkiss, where "[t]uition is almost \$50,000 a year" (60). The average class size is 12 students, which Hotchkiss's marketing department describes as its greatest asset. The marketing also focuses on Hotchkiss's lakes, hockey rinks, Steinway pianos, and golf course: "Hotchkiss has fallen into the trap that wealthy people and wealthy institutions and wealthy countries—all Goliaths—too often fall into: the school assumes that the kinds of things that wealth can buy always translate into real-world advantages" (61). As has been shown in this chapter, they do not.

## Part 1, Chapter 3 Summary: “Caroline Sacks”

Édouard Manet was the oldest member of a group of painters who met every evening at the Café Guerbois in Paris, 150 years ago. The group included Edgar Degas, Paul Cézanne, Renoir, and Claude Monet. Despite their future as artistic masters, they were poor and had only each other for support. They were impressionists, and in the 1860s impressionism was not taken seriously. They often discussed the Salon, “the most important art exhibition in all of Europe” (65). Paintings at the Salon had to be voted in by a jury of experts, and the Salon jury was notorious for rejecting the Impressionists, who had “an entirely different idea about what constituted art” (67). They were untraditional and painted indistinct figures.

If the group wanted their paintings to be accepted, they would have to make art that had no meaning for them. They argued about whether they should persist at the Salon or stage their own exhibits for themselves: “We strive for the best and attach great importance to getting into the finest institutions we can. But rarely do we stop and consider—as the Impressionists did—whether the most prestigious of institutions is always in our best interests” (68).

Gladwell introduces Caroline Sacks, who grew up in the Washington, D.C. area. Sacks was interested in science as a child. As she finished high school—her performance had been exemplary—her father helped her tour American universities. She was most excited about Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island. But she had also toured Wesleyan, Yale, Boston College, and other prestigious universities, in addition to the smaller, but respectable, University of Maryland.

Gladwell ponders Sacks’s academic options: “Did Caroline Sacks make the right choice?” (70). He compares her choice to that of the Impressionists. They framed their choice not as between a better option and a worse one, but simply of different options, each of which had advantages and disadvantages. The Salon was like a selective Ivy League school. It could provide greater exposure for artists but was not without its downsides. Four thousand paintings were accepted each year and hung in a large building in rows that stretched to the ceilings. Only the paintings at ground level presented a clear view. The crowds were also immense.

In 1873, Pissarro and Monet set up an artist collective in which “every artist would be treated as an equal” (72). It opened in 1874 and gave a showing that lasted for one month. All paintings were hung in a way that ensured they could be seen. Thousands would attend over the course of the month and most of the attention was positive: “Off by themselves, the Impressionists found a new identity. They felt a new creative freedom, and before long, the outside world began to take notice” (73). The exhibit would eventually be known as the most important in the history of modern art. By going to the Ivy League school Brown University, Caroline Sacks would choose the Salon: “She ended up paying a high price” (74).

As a freshman, Caroline struggled in chemistry. She retook a chemistry class in her second semester and her grade did not improve. The other students were so competitive that no one talked or shared information. No matter how hard she worked, nothing helped. She found an organic chemistry class particularly difficult and contemplated leaving science altogether. She came to believe that her brain simply couldn’t handle chemistry. Gladwell points out that her scores still would have put her in the 99th percentile among all the students in the world who were taking organic chemistry, but “Sacks wasn’t comparing herself to all the students in the world taking Organic Chemistry. She was comparing herself to her fellow students at Brown” (76).

A sociologist named Samuel Stouffer refers to what Sacks was facing as “relative deprivation” (77). In World War II,



Stouffer was tasked with examining the morale and attitude of American soldiers. One surprising finding was that “Military Policemen had a far more positive view of their organization than did enlisted men in the Air Corps” (77). This confused Stouffer because the Military Police had a terrible record of promoting people of ability. The Air Corps was the opposite, always seeming to promote based on merit. But it turned out that Military Policemen only compared themselves to others in their specific field. Each man knew that if he didn’t get promoted, almost no one else was either. In the Air Corps, when promotions were frequent, not receiving one caused stress for the people left behind: “We form our impression not globally, by placing ourselves in the broadest possible context, but locally—by comparing ourselves to people ‘in the same boat as ourselves’” (78).

When “relative deprivation” is applied to education, it is called the “Big Fish-Little Pond Effect” (80). Students in the lower ranks of an elite university will judge themselves more harshly than if the same scores placed them near the top of the ranks in a small university. Gladwell states that Sacks’s experience is common. American students in science, tech, engineering, and math programs (STEM) have a greater than 50 percent dropout rate after their “first or second year” (81).

By choosing Brown University, Sacks actually increased her chances of dropping out of science. Gladwell cites a study finding that “the likelihood of someone completing a STEM degree—all things being equal, rises by 2 percentage points for every 10-point decrease in the university’s average SAT score” (85). When they finish their conversation, Sacks tells Gladwell that if she had gone to the University of Maryland instead of Brown, she would still be in science.

## Part 1, Introduction-Chapter 3 Analysis

In the Introduction, Gladwell outlines the project of *David and Goliath*. He wants readers to see that giants can be beaten and that this happens more than might be predicted. Then, he shows how it can and might be done. The Biblical story of David and Goliath is a useful touchstone for his hypotheses. It is recognizable even to those unfamiliar with the Bible, and the image of the giant versus the shepherd boy conveys an immediate impression of crushing strength versus a small foe that should not stand a chance. In some ways, *David and Goliath* is almost set up to have the feel of a self-help book. The battle between the giant and the boy parallels a story in which someone learns how to overcome adversity and inspire others to do likewise. However, it is not a book of methods for fighting giants, but rather, a collection of stories that shows how some people have gone about it. Whether or not the concepts are replicable will be determined by each reader.

Part 1 encourages the reader to start using inverted logic when contemplating the relationship between advantages and disadvantages. For Gladwell, an advantage can be defined as anything that can be used to win, to win more often, or to win more decisively. Disadvantages are hindrances that make one more likely to lose or are prohibitive to success and happiness.

With the story of Ranadivé, Gladwell introduces the concept that unorthodox methods can be applied to various disciplines. It stands to reason that someone who had never coached basketball should not be expected to lead a group of inexperienced players and take them to the Nationals. Ranadivé thought about the game in a way that other coaches did not. He did not care so much about teaching the game of basketball as he did about winning it. The full court press was the only thing he could see that would mitigate the gap between the skill level of his team and others. The Ranadivé chapter serves as an appropriate introduction to the goal of assessing each situation or battle from an unusual viewpoint. Ranadivé’s starting point was not that he could never win, but rather, only to ask himself

what would winning have to look like, in order for his team to do it.

In Chapters 2 and 3, Gladwell raises the stakes beyond that of a basketball game with a discussion about the duties of a parent and the realities of education, both at the middle school level and at university. The rich man from Hollywood is worried about his children being successful, despite his ability to buy them whatever they want. He serves as a starting point for what success means to different people before Gladwell switches to the discussion of the falling class sizes at DeBrito's middle school. In the home, it is a parent's job to teach the lessons that are a parent's duty. In school, DeBrito's teachers have their own duties.

When he asks the readers whether they would want their children in a smaller or larger classroom, the answer will certainly be in line with the reader's concept of how children learn best, and what teachers need in order to do their best work. Even if the data provided are unpersuasive to a particular reader, the methodology of looking at the Connecticut schools is a good example of Gladwell's approach to coming at problems from different angles.

The DeBrito chapter prepares the reader for the Big Fish and Small Pond discussion of higher education. By the time students enter college, ideally they know what they want to study and are passionate about their plan. But Caroline Sacks's experience shows that passion is not enough to sustain a student through a college degree unless the student is also at a university where one can succeed. Sacks did not want for quality instruction or adequate study facilities. She struggled because the environment at Brown presented challenges she had not anticipated. The only way to anticipate such challenges would be to think about all the potential disadvantages that might come with a school like Brown, even though it is a coveted destination for many.

As Part 1 concludes, the reader has been prepared for another raising of the stakes as the stories—and their potential outcomes and consequences—grow more serious.

## Part 2

### Part 2: "The Theory of Desirable Difficulty"

#### Part 2, Chapter 4 Summary: "David Boies"

Gladwell describes the brain scan of a person with dyslexia. In the parts of the brain responsible for processing words, a dyslexic has less gray matter: "If you ask a dyslexic to read when he or she is having a brain scan, the parts that are supposed to light up might not light up at all" (99). The common view of dyslexia is that it distorts the ways in which words are seen, but the problem is more complex. It has to do with the way people "hear and manipulate sound" (100). Children with dyslexia are more likely to struggle in school, and kids who struggle in school "are more likely to end up in the juvenile system, because they act up" (102).

The prior discussion of advantages now changes to a discussion of disadvantages. Over the new few chapters, Gladwell will interrogate the issue of whether what are typically called disadvantages are always something to be avoided: "There are such things as desirable difficulties" (102), which can be used as an explanation for why underdogs often succeed. As an example, Gladwell tells the story of a mathematical intelligence test question. More people got the answer correct when the font was rendered gray and fuzzy instead of clear, as would be expected in a printed book. The extra effort required to make out the fuzzy and gray letters seemed to help student focus harder to the point where they were more likely to understand the question well enough to find a solution. Caroline Sacks's difficulty in organic chemistry was an undesirable difficulty, but some difficulties can be beneficial.

Gladwell ponders the benefits of a supposed disadvantage: “Can dyslexia be a desirable difficulty?” (105). It seems counterintuitive, given the importance placed on literacy. But a surprising number of entrepreneurs are dyslexic, including Richard Branson, Charles Schwab, and many others. One interpretation of this fact is that the struggles brought about by the learning disability taught the entrepreneurs something that became an advantage.

David Boies could not read until he was in the third grade. After high school, he got a job in construction, and then as a bookkeeper in a bank. He then attended law school and is now one of the most famous trial lawyers in the world. Because the law is built around reading, Gladwell posits how this career trajectory could happen for one with a learning disadvantage. Boies began college at Redlands University in California. At that time, students could apply to law school without graduating from college. Boies was struggling with the reading-intensive core classes at Redlands, so this was ideal. In law school, he read summaries of cases instead of the cases themselves. He committed to listening when people talked and trying to develop his aural memory instead of his literary memory. Students who relied on taking notes could still lose focus. Boies never lost focus while listening. He then chose to become a litigator because it involved more time thinking quickly while speaking than in deciphering contracts and paperwork. One of his strengths has become distilling cases to their essence for jurors, rather than letting them get bogged down in details.

Like the CRT intelligence test, Boies excelled at his task through the extra effort listening requires: “He had to scramble and adapt and come up with some kind of strategy that allowed him to keep pace with everyone around him” (112). What is learned from necessity can be more useful and powerful than learning that does not require struggle. A man named Brian Grazer tells Gladwell that the only thing that helped him get through school as a dyslexic was his commitment to persuading his teachers to give him better grades. After each test he would practice his skills and meet with the teachers, often convincing them to raise him one letter grade. Grazer is now a powerful Hollywood producer, and Gladwell thinks it is possible that his practice negotiating with his teachers has contributed to his success.

“Dyslexics are outsiders” (115) in similar ways to the Impressionists. They must sometimes stand outside of what is expected in order to find success. Gladwell introduces what is called the “Five Factor Model,” which assesses a person’s personality across five categories: Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Conscientiousness, and Agreeableness. Innovators tend to rank high in Openness, which refers to being open to new experiences. But they rank low in Agreeableness, which means they are willing to take “social risks—to do things that others might disapprove of” (116).

The founder of IKEA, Ingvar Kamprad, had the idea of cutting costs by selling unassembled furniture. In the 1950s, unhappy furniture manufacturers boycotted IKEA. Kamprad was forced to look elsewhere since they would not fill his orders. He looked to Poland, which he could use for cheaper labor and its surplus of wood. He spent as much time in Poland as he needed to make things work, which is an example of ranking highly in conscientiousness. He didn’t care what other people thought, which shows a lack of the trait Agreeableness. This also happened against the backdrop of the Cold War, which had turned Poland into a logistical nightmare for commerce. Kamprad didn’t care. As far as dyslexia, Gladwell believes that “it might make it a little easier to be disagreeable” (118).

## Part 2, Chapter 5 Summary: “Emil ‘Jay’ Freireich”

Emil “Jay” Freireich lost his father in 1929, shortly after the stock market crash. Freireich believed the death was a

suicide. His mother had to work 18-hour days to provide for her children. She hired an Irish maid who watched after the children for room and board. Freireich came to view that woman as his true mother. Several years later, he was spending his days on the street, stealing because his family could not afford milk. He was not close with his family and did not like the stepfather that his mother had married.

Gladwell describes the fall of 1940, when the Germans began an eight-month bombing campaign on London. While planning for the attacks, British officials had been convinced that people would panic and flee to the countryside. They were wrong: "People who needed to stay in the city by and large stayed" (129). Soon, officials were surprised to notice that Londoners were starting to treat the bombs with indifference, despite the devastation they were causing: "Civilians from other countries also turned out to be unexpectedly resilient in the face of bombing" (130). Gladwell asks how this was possible.

In a book called *The Structure of Morale*, J.T. MacCurdy divides the population of a place that is being bombed into three categories: "people killed," "near misses," and "remote misses." Morale depends on how survivors react, so corpses are not the ones who create more panic, explaining the first category. Near misses are those who witness the effects of a bomb and are "impressed" (131), which can mean anything from a state of shock to a feeling of fear. Remote misses are those who are aware of bombing, but do not see or suffer its immediate consequences. When remote misses survive several nearby attacks, they can start to feel invincible, "a feeling of excitement with a flavor of invulnerability" (131). During the London bombings, despite the massive toll, there were more people who would be classified as remote misses than near misses or people killed.

Gladwell calls MacCurdy's theory of morale a "second, broader perspective" (133) on the idea of desirable difficulties. MacCurdy concluded that trauma could actually leave some people better off as a result. Gladwell returns to Freireich's childhood. He contracted grave tonsillitis at age 8 and a doctor visited him in the home. By age 10, Freireich had decided he wanted to be a doctor as well. At the University of Illinois he worked as a hematology researcher. After being drafted into the Army he served at the National Cancer Institute outside of Washington, D.C. He was a gifted physician but had a terrible temper and few social graces: "In Freireich's formative years, every human connection ended in death and abandonment—and a childhood as bleak as that leaves only pain and anger in its wake" (138). Gladwell then asks if the reader believes it is possible that a childhood such as Freireich's could result in a remote miss.

A 1960s project interviewing creative types found that "a surprising number had lost a parent in childhood" (140). The psychologist Marvin Eisenstadt took two sets of encyclopedias and made a list of every person whose lives and works had resulted in more than one encyclopedia column. He had 699 people and researched their lives—to the extent that information was available—for the next 10 years. Forty-five percent of them had lost a parent before the age of 20. A historian named Lucille Iremonger found that 67 percent of England's prime ministers had lost a parent before age 16: "Twelve of the first forty-four U.S. presidents—beginning with George Washington and going all the way up to Barack Obama—lost their fathers while they were young" (141).

Eisenstadt stresses that parents are essential, but his research, and that of others, "suggests that there is also such a thing as a remote miss from the death of a parent" (142). In 1955, Freireich began working in the childhood leukemia ward at the National Cancer Institute. Childhood leukemia was lethal, terrifying, and poorly understood: "When they came to the hospital, ninety percent of the kids would be dead in six weeks" (145), according to Freireich. While it was too psychologically stressful for most physicians, Freireich was relatively unaffected. Eventually, he became convinced that the problem was a lack of platelets in the children's blood. This meant that the children's

blood couldn't clot. To prove his theory Freireich needed blood for transfusions, but this was against regulations.

He began recruiting donors on his own. He was threatened with administrative discipline and ignored every threat. Eventually, his research got the bleeding to stop. Gladwell tries to determine the origin of Freireich's courage and returns to MacCurdy's idea of remote misses: "The conquering of fear produces exhilaration" (148). Freireich's courage meant that children could now survive long enough to be studied in terms of solving the harder problem of leukemia. At the time, the drugs that killed leukemia cells could only be given in small doses. The dangerous cells would return after a week. Freireich contemplated combining the medications, which would seem to be more aggressive, but each of the drugs attacked leukemia in a different way and their combined effects were unknown.

Freireich asked for approval to try four drugs together and was denied by the medical board. His boss eventually acquiesced and approved a trial called the VAMP regimen. As their patients in the trial died, Freireich concluded that the children had to be treated monthly for a year. Children in remission seemed healthy. Freireich's treatment would require them to return to the hospital while seemingly healthy and receive drugs that would make them sick: "Today, the cure rate for this form of cancer is more than 90 percent" (160).

Gladwell does not believe that a childhood like Freireich's is desirable, yet it can yield positive results: "The right question is whether we as a society need people who have emerged from some sort of trauma—and the answer is that we plainly do" (161).

## Part 2, Chapter 6 Summary: "Wyatt Walker"

Gladwell discusses the most famous photo from the civil rights movement. Shot in Birmingham in 1963 by Bill Hudson, it shows a teenage boy being attacked by a police dog. The boy is calm even as the dog bites him, accepting what is happening. The photograph was published in all major newspapers and was a great embarrassment to President Kennedy.

When Martin Luther King Jr. arrived in Birmingham in 1963, it was "the most racially divided city in America" (167). Ku Klux Klansmen terrorized Blacks with the support of police protection. King was the underdog and did not expect all of the people who had come with him to survive the days ahead. But Gladwell believes that he had an advantage because King came from "a community that had always been an underdog" (169).

Gladwell discusses the "trickster hero" popular in folklore. The trickster conquers bigger foes through cunning and deception. In America, Brer Rabbit is a prime example of the trickster. After being trapped—stuck to a baby doll covered in tar—by Fox, Brer Rabbit tricked him into throwing him into a briar patch, where he used the briar thorns to cut the tar off of himself and escape: "Trickster tales were wish fulfillments in which slave dreamed of one day rising above their white masters" (171). Brer Rabbit's success was contingent on how well he understood Fox. As another desirable difficulty, Gladwell describes "the unexpected freedom that comes from having nothing to lose. The trickster gets to break the rules" (172).

A man named Wyatt Walker was the executive director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and one of King's most valuable allies. Together, they tried to find unorthodox ways to fight the racism of Birmingham as well as Bull Connor, the city's racist public safety commissioner. They were outmatched and needed to find a way to play the role of Brer Rabbit. King asked Walker to create a crisis they could use: "The crisis created by Walker was the photograph of a teenage boy being attacked by a police dog" (173).

Walker was fond of playing tricks on Connor. He organized aimless, long protest marches that police could not interfere with as they wound through offices and lobbies. He called in fake tips to the police about Blacks gathering outside of town, then laughed when the police went to investigate. But he knew King would not approve of the mischief, so he did it secretly: “People called Martin Luther King ‘Mr. Leader.’ Walker was Brer Rabbit” (177).

Walker devised what he called Project C, “for confrontation” (177). Project C involved sit-ins at local businesses, boycotts of downtown businesses, and mass marches that would lead to so many arrests that the jails would be filled. After the jails were full, Connor could not arrest the protestors because he would have nowhere to put them. But unless Connor fought back, Project C could not work. King asked Walker to make sure that Connor would be forced to show his “ugly side” (178). The national media was watching and for the movement it was important that Project C be a public success on the news.

After several weeks, the campaign was losing momentum. King had difficulty getting people to march with them. Many were afraid that they would be fired by their white bosses if they participated. Walker found a way to use their small numbers to their advantage. If they waited to march until most people’s work shifts had ended, and began their protests as soon as downtown filled with commuters going home after their job, it looked as if the streets were filled with protestors. The news reported that 1,100 people had marched one day when in fact it had been fewer than 30. For Connor, “[t]hose imaginary one thousand protestors were a provocation” (182).

After a month of Project C, Walker arranged for hundreds of high school students to be at the 16th Street Baptist Church. Over 600 children were arrested as they came out of the church and prayed. A week later, over 1500 schoolchildren skipped school and repeated the protest. Fire trucks were there so that protestors could be sprayed with powerful hoses if Connor decided to do so. There were also many police German Shepherds there, and Connor had wanted to use the dogs for a long time. Walker knew that if he could provoke Connor into a dog attack on children—and he did—it would be a great advantage.

Gladwell addresses the reader: “Does Wyatt Walker’s behavior make you uncomfortable?” (186). King and Walker were criticized in the aftermath for tricking the kids into a dangerous situation. Malcolm X said that “real men don’t put their children on the firing line” (187). Two days later, King preached a sermon to the parents of the kids who had been arrested. King tried to make the parents proud of the suffering their children were enduring, but it is unclear how many parents were convinced by his argument. Walker and King were duplicitous in their planning. They pretended to have more protestors than they did. They condemned Connor for unleashing the dogs while they were secretly overjoyed at provoking that level of police brutality. It was ethically complex, but according to Gladwell, “we shouldn’t be shocked by this” (188). They used the most effective means available to them, and they had to perform as tricksters, who act out of necessity.

Walter Gadsden was the boy in the photo. He was a spectator, not a marcher. Upon closer examination of the photo, it is clear that Gadsden was not passively letting the dog attack him. He is grabbing the police officer’s wrist to steady himself while he delivers a kick to the dog: “Hudson’s photograph is not at all what the world thought it was” (192). It was actually a masterpiece of trickery.

Part 1 can be read both as Gladwell’s reasoning for approaching problems in unexpected ways, and of viewing advantages as disadvantages (as well as knowing when the inverse is true). Part 2 begins to demonstrate the potential costs of not attacking problems, with particular emphasis on the story of Emil Freireich. Part 2 also

introduces the ideas that, while difficulties can lead to growth, discoveries, and adaptations that might otherwise not appear, they may also be essential for breakthroughs. People without desirable difficulties may find themselves dependent on those who have overcome them, or may find themselves benefiting from the fact that some people have overcome trauma and adapted as a result.

The example of Boies's dyslexia—and Gladwell's question of whether a parent would ever wish dyslexia on their child—further the discussion of education and expands on it. It appears probable that Boies would not have gained his particular skillset had he not learned to compensate for the challenges caused by his learning disability. His grateful clients in the future would benefit from his expertise as a lawyer, but it is the story of Emil Freireich that best—if the reader accepts Gladwell's premise of adversity and adaptation—shows the importance of desirable difficulties in the development of society.

Assume that Freireich's bleak childhood was in fact responsible for his fearlessness as a physician and leukemia researcher. His tenacity and disagreeableness indisputably led to the savings of many thousands of lives. Had his childhood experiences conquered him, it is impossible to say how much longer modern medicine would have waited before someone discovered the VAMP protocol that he had notable success with. His story shows that someone who fights a giant such as childhood leukemia, even in the absence of administrative and professional support, can alter the entire course of medicine. Gladwell questions where the doctor could have done so without the trauma of his formative years.

Wyatt Walker's work with the civil rights movement is a corollary of Freireich. Although slavery had ended approximately a century before Walker arrived in Birmingham, African-Americans were discriminated against, beaten, and even killed, regularly. Had Walker and Martin Luther King Jr. not taken their stand against Bull Connor and the racist bureaucracy of the South, it is impossible to estimate how many more lives would have been lost and damaged by those who felt they could perform their racism publicly and with impunity. Walker operated with a chip on his shoulder similar to that of Freireich—he knew adversity and he knew that, while others might give in to it, he could not afford to. Enslavement and childhood abandonment are certainly not desirable, but as difficulties that may have helped bring about the changes of the civil rights movement and the inroads of childhood leukemia treatment, they were.

Part 2 is a powerful argument that progress is hindered without people who have triumphed over adversity. Part 3 will expand these ideas onto a global scale.

## Part 2, Chapters 4-6 Analysis

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## Part 3

### Part 3: “The Limits of Power”

#### Part 3, Chapter 7 Summary: “Rosemary Lawlor”

Rosemary Lawlor was a newlywed and a new mother in Ireland in the summer of 1969. Militant Catholics and Protestants were attacking each other across the country. Catholics were a minority in Northern Ireland and the Catholic Lawlors were afraid. They fled to the Catholic neighborhood of Ballymurphy, where things worsened by 1970. There were gunfights and riots. The British Army was summoned to maintain order. In June a woman named Harriet Carson arrived. She walked through the streets banging two pot lids and yelling for the hiding families to out. She said they all needed to go to the Lower Falls neighborhood, where families were locked in their houses and had no way to get food for their children: “The British Army had put the entire neighborhood under curfew while they searched for illegal weapons” (199). Lawlor’s father was worried that if they tried to help, the British Army would turn on them.

“The same year that Northern Ireland descended into chaos, two economists—Nathan Leites and Charles Wolf Jr.—wrote a report (“Rebellion and Authority”) about how to deal with insurgencies” (201). Their conclusion framed getting insurgents under control as a mathematical problem: “If there are riots in the streets of Belfast, it’s because



the costs to rioters of burning houses and smashing windows aren't high enough" (201).

Ian Freeland was the British general tasked with the Northern Ireland situation. He arrived with orders to put down resistance aggressively and publicly. On June 30, 1970, while searching a house in Lower Falls, people throwing stones attacked the British. A riot began. It had been stopped by 10 PM, but the already tense relationship between the Irish and the British was strained further. The next morning, Freeland toured the empty streets and thought that they would all be home within months: "Instead, what should have been a difficult few months turned into thirty years of mayhem and bloodshed" (203). They had believed that their superior resources and training would be enough to put down the insurgency, and that they did not need to consider how they were viewed in Northern Ireland.

Gladwell asks the reader to picture a classroom with walls covered in children's drawings, and then to imagine a kindergarten teacher named Stella. She is sitting at the front of the room reading aloud—lists of ingredients—from a book while the children yell, make faces, and run around the room. An observer might believe that the children were unruly, but Gladwell states that the children are only reacting to Stella's poor teaching method. She was so focused on the book, which was boring to begin with, that she can't focus on the children: "We often think of authority as a response to disobedience: a child acts up, so a teacher cracks down. Stella's classroom, however, suggests something quite different: disobedience can also be a response to authority" (205). Gladwell has been watching an actual video of Stella's class, shown to him by researchers Pianta and Hamre.

In the next video, a teacher reads homework instructions to a class of children. One boy, after the instructions, begins to work on his assignment immediately. The teacher firmly tells him to stop because it is "homework" (207). He was eager to work and to learn, but if he becomes defiant, "it is because the teacher made him that way" (207). If someone is in the role of enforcing behavior, how that person behaves is critical.

Gladwell introduces the three principles of what he calls the "principle of legitimacy" (208). First, people who are asked to obey must have a voice and feel that they will be heard. Second, laws must be consistent and predictable. Third, the figure of authority must exercise its authority with fairness. As an example, he cites a multi-year, ongoing experiment in Brownsville, a New York City neighborhood: "For years, it has been among the most destitute corners of New York City" (208). The Brownsville projects always had a higher crime rate than other neighborhoods.

In 2003, a police officer, Joanne Jaffe, made a list of juveniles in Brownsville who had at least one arrest on their record from the previous year. There were 106, spread across 180 arrests, so her juveniles were likely responsible for even more crimes than they were caught at. Jaffe's officers contacted the youths and told them they were in "the program" (209). The juveniles were told that every effort would be made to get them back in school, to provide services for their family, and to meet any foundational needs they had, provided that they stopped all criminal activity. "We are going to be all over you" (210), she told them.

In the Juvenile Robbery Intervention Program (J-RIP), Jaffe set up surveillance operations and cameras everywhere she could, to make sure the juveniles in the program knew they were being watched and that consequences would be dire if they committed crimes. She also prioritized staffing her task force with officers who loved kids and who had records of being able to sway them. Jaffe was also determined to meet and know the families of the J-RIP kids, but the families avoided her for the first eight months of the program. But then Jaffe and her officers bought Thanksgiving turkeys for every family and delivered them door to door, which finally resulted in real relationships.

Jaffe wanted to meet the families because she "didn't think the police in Brownsville were perceived as legitimate" (214). Every juvenile in J-RIP was likely to have had at least one male relative who had already done time in prison.

The police were seen as the enemy from an early age. Next, she began a Christmas toy give away for the J-RIP families, and then invited them all to a Christmas dinner. The robberies in Brownsville dropped precipitously over the next three years. Gladwell believes that if Ian Freeman had had the ability to see Northern Ireland as the Irish did, as Jaffe did with the J-RIP juveniles, a great deal of violence could have been avoided.

“July in Northern Ireland is the height of what is known as ‘marching season,’ when the country’s Protestant loyalists organize parades to commemorate their long-ago victories over the country’s Catholic minority” (217). It is always a time of violence and riots, which exasperated Freeland and caused him to enforce order even more harshly during marching season. During the Lower Falls riots, the Catholics were anxious to have the British protect them, but they were “equally anxious about how law and order would be enforced” (220). Freeland never stopped to ask himself if he had the legitimacy to enforce the law. In 1970, when Freeland threatened that anyone throwing gasoline bombs would be shot, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) pushed back, saying they would begin shooting the British soldiers. The violence increased over the coming years, and Rosemary Lawlor’s brother Eamon was among the casualties.

### Part 3, Chapter 8 Summary: “Wilma Derksen”

In June of 1992, an 18-year-old named Kimber Reynolds was shot during a car theft by a man named Joe David. The shooting took place in front of a crowded, popular restaurant. Reynolds died the next day. Gladwell speaks with her father, Mike Reynolds: “Everything I’ve done ever since is about a promise I made to Kimber on her deathbed [...] I can’t save your life. But I’m going to do everything in my power to try and prevent this from happening to anyone else” (234).

Fourteen hours after Reynolds’s death, her father went on the radio of show of Ray Appleton, a popular host. For two hours they took calls from people who knew the Reynolds family or who wanted to vent about the broken legal system in Fresno, where the murder occurred. Afterwards, Mike invited anyone he thought might be able to make a difference in Fresno’s high murder rate to a barbecue, including judges, police officers, lawyers, and many others: “Their conclusion was that in California the penalties associated with breaking the law were too low” (235). The group created a proposal that would be known as the Three Strikes Law. Someone convicted of a third criminal offense would serve 25 years to life in prison, with no exceptions. Three Strikes was passed in the spring of 1994. Over the next 10 years, the prison population doubled, but crime fell drastically.

Today, Mike Reynolds sees himself as a man who was fortunate enough to help save many peoples’ lives, even though he had to lose his daughter in the process. He became a highly influential figure in California: “In his case, power seemed to have achieved its purpose. Just look at the California crime statistics. He got what he wanted, didn’t he? Nothing could be further from the truth” (238). When considering law, order, and enforcement, Reynolds and the voters of California assumed that more—longer sentences, more arrests—must be better. However, Gladwell raises the question that no one asked: Was there any chance that Three Strikes could make crime worse?

Criminologists Richard Wright and Scott Decker interviewed dozens of armed robbers and asked them all how they thought about the threat of punishment. The robbers all had a similar answer: they didn’t think about it because it took away from their focus. They distracted themselves by planning the task or getting high, but they drove the thought of getting caught and penalized from their minds. A law like Three Strikes does not work on criminals who are in this mindset. When Joe Davis was asked about what he was thinking before the carjacking that ended in Kimber Reynold’s murder, he said, “I wasn’t really thinking much of nothing, you know. When it happens, it happens” (242). Davis’s family members and friends would later tell Mike that he had shot Kimber because he didn’t like the

way she was looking at him. It is illogical to assume that the threat of punishment can intervene in a brain that operates like that.

Another argument for Three Strikes is that when a criminal is incarcerated, every year in prison is a year he can't commit a crime, but Gladwell demonstrates the problems with the calculation: "The average age of a California criminal in 2011 at the moment he was convicted of his Third Strike offense, for example, was forty-three" (242). Before Three Strikes, the criminal could expect to be released on a common felony by the age of 48. After Three Strikes, he would be incarcerated until at least age 48. But criminals do not commit many crimes between the ages of 43 and 68, showing that Three Strikes has a better chance of working on young people.

There is an argument that cracking down on crime as aggressively as Three Strikes can actually make crime worse. The criminologist Todd Case believes that incarceration can have an indirect effect on crime: "A very high number of men who get sent to prison, for instance, are fathers" (245). The child of an incarcerated parent has a chance of becoming a juvenile delinquent that is "between 300 and 400 percent" (245). Case also argues that when a former prisoner returns home, he is likely to have replaced his non-criminal friends with criminal ones, and his future prospects for employment will probably not be robust. This can create stress on the family that may result in additional collateral damage. During studies on relevant populations in Tallahassee, Florida, Clear concluded: "If more than two percent of the neighborhood goes to prison, the effect on crime starts to reverse" (246).

The crime rates that appeared to drop in California after Three Strikes had actually been dropping prior to the passing of the law: "The more Three Strikes was studied, the more elusive its effects were seen to be" (247). Many sociologists and criminologists have studied the efficacy of Three Strikes, and there is still no consensus on whether it helped or hurt.

Ten years before Kimber Reynolds was murdered, a Winnipeg teenager named Candace Derksen was abducted, raped, tortured, and killed. When they left the police station after learning about her death, Candace's parent Cliff and Wilma Derksen went home where friends and family visited them. A stranger came to their door and told them that he was also the parent of a murdered child. For hours, he told them about how his life had spiraled out of control in the aftermath, and how his search for justice had consumed him. He was warning them that they should know what to expect because he was sure the same thing would happen to them.

After 13-year-old Candace's funeral, her parents spoke with the press. When asked how they felt about the person who had murdered their daughter, Cliff said, "We would like to know who the person or persons are so we could share, hopefully, a love that seems to be missing in these peoples' lives" (253). Wilma said that she had not forgiven the person yet, but implied that she hoped to be able to in time. Neither of them spoke of justice or retribution.

Gladwell asks whether Wilma is more or less of a hero than Mike Reynolds: "Each acted out of the best of intentions and chose a deeply courageous path" (253). The Derksens had different ideas about what could be accomplished through power. They were raised in the Mennonite religion as pacifists. The Mennonite philosophy was to forgive and move forward. But Gladwell writes that forgiveness is not only a philosophy, but a "practical strategy based on the belief that there are profound limits to what the formal mechanisms of retribution can accomplish" (255).

In 2007, the Derksens received a call from the police, who said they had learned the identity of Candace's murderer. It had been 20 years. The man's name was Mark Grant, and he had lived near the Derksens. He had been imprisoned for most of his adult life and would stand trial in 2011, which the Derksens attended. Wilma was conflicted as she

watched Grant in court. She suddenly understood that he had taken pleasure in the suffering of her daughter and asked herself: "Why doesn't someone just kill him?" (260). Eventually, she managed to forgive him, worried that the cost of doing otherwise would have ruined her. To her, fighting back "would have been easier in the beginning, but then it would have gotten harder. I think I would have lost Cliff, I think I would have lost my children. In some ways I would be doing to others what he did to Candace" (261).

Reynolds used the full power of the state and produced what is today deemed to be a fruitless and expensive social experiment. Wilma forgave Grant to protect her own family and sanity. Gladwell comments that in this anecdote, "[t]he world is turned upside down" (261).

### Part 3, Chapter 9 Summary: "André Trocmé"

In 1940, France fell to Germany: "The German army allowed the French to set up a government in the city of Vichy" (263). A French general named Henri-Philippe Pétain, a World War I hero, was installed as a dictator. He immediately began collaborating with the Germans to take away the rights of Jews and placed many in internment camps. Most people in the region complied, but those in the small town of Le Chambon did not. Le Chambon had been home to many dissident Protestants, including a Huguenot pastor named André Trocmé. Trocmé was a pacifist but was firm in his belief that the people could not submit to unjust demands: "Loving, forgiving, and doing good to our adversaries is our duty, yet we must do this without giving up, without being cowardly" (264). He refused to allow fascist salutes in Le Chambon, and would not fly the German flag or salute it.

When Pétain decreed that all French teachers would sign loyalty oaths, Trocmé and his staff refused and did so again when Pétain announced that pictures of him must be displayed in French schools. Jewish refugees began arriving in Le Chambon, which had gotten a reputation as being "hospitable" (265). In 1942, Pétain sent an official named Georges Lamirand of Vichy to Le Chambon to begin to set up French versions of Hitler Youth camps. Lamirand and his entourage received a hospitable but cold reception. After a banquet, a group of students approached Lamirand and gave him a letter saying that they had heard of the deportation of Jews, but could not support it. The letter concludes with: "We have Jews. You're not getting them" (267).

Based on their other actions, Gladwell asks why the Nazis did not come to the defiant city of Le Chambon and make an example of them. He believes it is because of the argument already put forth in this book: "The powerful are not as powerful as they seem—nor the weak as weak" (268). The Huguenots had been persecuted for centuries and had never broken or given in to an oppressor. Trocmé's wife Magda said, "The people in our village knew already what persecutions were" (269). They were able to sympathize with the plight of the Jews. Not helping them never occurred to the Trocmés. When asked how she made the decision to hide Jews, Magda replied, "There was no decision to make. The issue was, Do you think we are all brothers or not?" (270).

André Trocmé was arrested six months after Lamirand's visit and taken to a prison camp. Two months later he was told that if he signed a loyalty oath and stopped his defiance, he could go home. Trocmé said no and did not even consider it. Confounded, the prison officials sent him home anyway. Later he would be forced from Le Chambon and would begin ferrying Jews across the Alps to the safety of Switzerland. He never stopped trying to help: "Trocmé was disagreeable in the same magnificent sense as Jay Freireich and Wyatt Walker" (272). He had nothing to lose and did not make decisions like typical people. When he was caught, he had been traveling under a false name. When asked if he was Monsieur Béguet, his pseudonym, he said, "I am Pastor André Trocmé" (273).

Gladwell asks how a Goliath defeats someone who thinks like Trocmé—someone who simply doesn't care what is done to him. Near the end of the war, Trocmé's adolescent son Jean-Pierre hanged himself. He would later write: "Even today I carry within myself, the death of my son, and I am like a decapitated pine. Pine trees do not regenerate their tops. They stay twisted, crippled" (274). Gladwell wonders if Trocmé did not remember Le Chambon for a moment, because he wrote one more line: "They grow in thickness, perhaps, and that is what I am doing" (275).

### Part 3, Chapters 7-9 Analysis

Power that is wielded and misused by one person can still have devastating effects on those subordinate to it. But Part 3 raises the discussion to a level of worldwide import, casting entire armies and nations as abusers of power that can distort the trajectories of societies and countries for generations. It is not that Goliaths should be seen as powerless: they do not gain their formidable reputations without reason. The issue for Gladwell is more that the nature of power gets mischaracterized as limitless, and people who are not helpless began to see themselves as helpless.

Ian Freeland's presence in Northern Ireland galvanized more bloodshed than was necessary. He could have acted as a potential defender and hero, winning the respect of the residents of Lower Falls, had he cared about how he was perceived by them, not only by his own men and government. According to Gladwell, the creation of the IRA and decades of fighting could possibly have been avoided if Freeland had been a tactful and considerate leader, instead of relying on brutish force and an assurance that no one could stand against British might indefinitely. By the time the Irish began opening fire on soldiers, it was too late.

Similarly, by the time Mike Reynolds and Wilma Derksen chose their paths in the wake of their respective daughter's murders, it was also too late to avoid their personal tragedies. But Reynolds enlisted the help of the state in order to seek justice and, ideally, to prevent future crime. Derksen forgave her daughter's killer, knowing that to hold a grudge and see a vague form of justice would come at too great a cost for her family and sanity. According to Gladwell, Reynolds's enforced Three Strikes Law can be viewed as a counterproductive abuse of power. Despite well-intentions, the legislation did not bring about its stated aims. During the decade of its enactment, Gladwell suggests evidence that the law unintentionally garnered more crime, more fractured families, and a greater hatred of law enforcement for those who have incarcerated relatives.

The Nazi party in the story of André Trocmé is the clearest example of the misuse and illegitimacy of power. The Third Reich stated its aims clearly and intended to crush all resistance through brutal shows of force and cruelty. Their might was not enough to make Trocmé and the people of Le Chambon cower, however. Trocmé was unwilling to give in to a giant that would be responsible for over 6 million deaths by the end of the war. He refused to grant legitimacy to a power that was indisputably and demonstrably mighty. By ending with the story of Trocmé, Gladwell gives the readers a chance to ask themselves if their own lives are likely to intersect with a giant as fearsome as that of Hitler's armies. The conclusion of the book encourages readers to ask if they are giving power more legitimacy than it deserves, and if they may be shortchanging their own progress and potential benefit to the world by assuming that their personal Goliaths are unbeatable.

## Key Figures

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### David

David was a shepherd of the Israelites. At the height of the conflict between his people and the Philistines, David steps forward to represent Israel in single combat against the giant Goliath. If David wins, the war will end. If he loses, the Israelites will be enslaved. David is overmatched and refuses to wear the armor that Saul offers him before the fight. He says that he learned everything he needed while keeping predators away from his flocks. David puts a rock in a sling and runs towards Goliath. He hits him in the forehead with the rock and then cuts off the giant's head with a sword, ending the war. David is representative of anyone who fights against odds that look overwhelming. He is an example of the cunning, dexterity, and counterintuitive thinking that informs Gladwell's arguments about why underdogs win more frequently than people might assume.

### Goliath

Goliath was a giant and the champion of the Philistines. When he comes down to fight David in single combat, it is clear that his vision is poor. But he is strong and his defenses appear to be impervious, particularly against a foe as small and vulnerable as David. However, Goliath's strengths are quickly shown to be weaknesses. His size makes him slow, as does his heavy armor. He cannot use his physical strength from a distance and is therefore an ideal target for David's sling. Goliath represents power as well as how unconventional means can beat power.

### Malcolm Gladwell

As the author of the book, Gladwell interviews many of the subjects he writes about. He refrains from inserting himself other than to make it clear that he heard many of his anecdotes directly from Freireich, Sacks, and others. When Gladwell has been criticized for his work—with *David and Goliath* and other books—it is typically because he is being cast in the role of scientist, rather than of journalist, and that his conclusions are not supported by the data he cites. However, while Gladwell does occasionally draw hard conclusions, in *David and Goliath* it is clear that he views his role as one of a storyteller and conversation starter, never pretending to put forth a definitive view on any issue. He appears more as an interested, curious participant than as an authority figure or academic.

# Themes

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## Giants Are Not What They Seem

In the Introduction, Gladwell creates a vision of Goliath that is terrifying. He is heavily armed with various blades and a spear, his armor weighs as much as a normal man's body, and he is close to seven feet tall. He is unbeaten in single combat and when he bellows his challenge to the Israelites, no one steps forth until David. In effect, Goliath is only formidable provided that someone fights him on his own terms, in a manner that he is familiar with, or ideally one that he chooses. Gladwell focuses on Goliath's poor eyesight, his possible thyroid condition, the cumbersome nature of that impenetrable armor, and his lack of speed. Once David is running towards him, whirling the sling, Goliath is confused and vulnerable in the brief moments before he is killed. In Gladwell's formulation, every giant can be put in this position: seeing some seemingly weaker rush towards him, pressing some unseen advantage that no one anticipated. If true, Gladwell hopes that it will give courage to those who find themselves outmatched and inspire those who believe in causes and conflicts that seem unwinnable. Myopia is an enemy to progress, and assuming that a powerful enemy cannot be beaten will always ensure that they remain victorious and intimidating.

## Difficulties Can be Advantages

In Part 2 of the book, Gladwell examines the theory of "desirable difficulties." The difficulties can include dyslexia, the trait of social disagreeableness, a traumatic childhood, wartime experience, poverty, and more. There are adaptations that do not occur unless necessitated as compensation for an area in which a person is deficient. Examples are Boies learning to memorize and persuade in the courtroom instead of torturing himself by slowly reading legal papers and contracts; Freireich using his traumatic childhood as a toughening agent that made him fearless in his leukemia experiments; and Wyatt Walker using African-Americans' experience as underdogs in order to sharpen his wits against Bull Connor during the civil rights movement. This remains a theory because there are plentiful instances in which someone with a difficulty does not use it to their advantage, but Gladwell's point is clear.

## Adversity and the "Remote Miss"

The "remote miss" in *David and Goliath* refers to one category of people who are involved in a bombing. The specific example given is that of Londoners in World War II who were in the city during the eight-month bombing campaign. The Germans believed that the bombing would devastate the city and the morale of the people. Many British officials agreed, thinking that the citizens would immediately flee to the countryside. This did not happen. Although thousands of lives were lost and much of the city was destroyed, the people were resilient, particularly if they were in the category of "remote miss." A remote miss was a person who was aware that the bombing was taking place, but may have had no first-hand experience with it. They might hear the bombs but not see them or be aware that other houses were being destroyed while theirs homes were spared. Over time, this led to a feeling of exhilaration and invincibility. This became an advantage that was created from a situation of trauma that could have created weakness. Gladwell frames many of the people in the book, and particularly those who had difficult childhoods, as remote misses. They became braver every time they overcame a challenge that might have defeated someone else, and their own strength was reinforced with every new experience they survived.

## Symbols & Motifs

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### The Shepherd

When David refuses to use Saul's armor in the fight, he says that he knows enough from his work as a shepherd. As a shepherd, his job was to feed the king's flocks and keep them safe from predators. At first, it is unclear as to how this would prepare him for lethal combat against an armed adversary. But David was accustomed to moving and adapting quickly as he used projectiles to attack packs of wolves that would menace the sheep. He was used to being overmatched numerically and to using his size and speed to his advantage. His experiences as a shepherd had also forced him to think unconventionally, which gave him the victory against Goliath. Many of the figures in *David and Goliath* come to their breakthroughs as a result of trying to protect and nurture those in their care, such as the police officer Joanne Joffe when she arrives in Brownsville and starts the J-RIP program.

### The Big Fish in the Small Pond

When Caroline Sacks chooses to attend Brown University instead of the University of Maryland, she takes the step that will eventually lead her to leave science altogether. Sacks had always been the top student in her classes, but this was not the case at Brown. Even though her scores at Brown would have put her in the top 99% of students worldwide, she was only average when compared to other elite Brown students. This allows Gladwell to introduce the idea of the "Big fish in the Small Pond." At the University of Maryland, Sacks would have been the Big Fish, and the school would have been the Small Pond. But she would have been able to thrive, study, and remain in the sciences with total confidence, even though the Small Pond might have lacked the prestige of an Ivy League institution. Gladwell returns to this dichotomy continually after Sacks's chapter, cautioning that the appearance of quality and prestige are not always what they seem.

### The Trickster

In Chapter 6, Gladwell introduces Wyatt Walker, who worked with Martin Luther King Jr. in Birmingham. Walker is compared to the trickster figures and gods of folklore, from Anansi the spider god to Brer Rabbit from the Uncle Remus tales. Trickster figures were wily and mischievous. They were often in situations that seemed inescapable, such as Brer Rabbit being trapped by the tar baby. But they were able to survive by their wits, often with an element of mischief. The hallmark of the trickster is that he enjoys "the unexpected freedom that comes from having nothing to lose. The trickster gets to break the rules" (172). Operating outside of the rules is something that allows David to outmaneuver Goliaths, who cannot see the strategies being used against them. While Gladwell does not necessarily celebrate these "tricks," he does propose how the underdog may resort to unethical stratagems in order to "win" against a more powerful adversary.



## Important Quotes

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1. "Giants are not what we think they are. The same qualities that appear to give them strength are often the sources of great weakness."

([Introduction](#), Page 6)

*Gladwell casts all overwhelming odds as giants, or Goliaths. Giants are characterized by size, power, and strength. But in the project of the book, seeing giants only in these ways is reductive. Not only that, this narrow view is what allows giants to maintain their power, when in fact some of their strengths can be used against them as weaknesses. For instance, if Goliath had been able to move more quickly, he may have had a chance at dodging the rock thrown from David's sling.*

2. "Much of what we consider valuable in our world arises out of (these) one-sided conflicts. Because the act of facing overwhelming odds produces greatness and beauty."

([Introduction](#), Page 6)

*Throughout the book, the battles against Goliaths are framed not only as winnable for the underdogs, but as actual duties of the underdogs. Struggling against a giant can lead to additional breakthroughs, beauty, and progress in the world. Not fighting simply because the odds look too great can be a way of stifling progress and greatness.*

3. "There is an important lesson in all battles with giants. The powerful and the strong are not always what they seem."

([Introduction](#), Page 14)

*Giants are framed as something to be fought against. Because the goal of any battle is to win, and because giants appear impervious, attacking them is an exercise in spotting vulnerabilities. One of Gladwell's precepts is that when confronted by a giant, one should not assume that the battle is unwinnable, but rather, to remember that underdogs often win simply because they refused to accept the authority of a giant's power.*

4. "We spend a lot of time thinking about the ways that prestige and resources and belonging to elite institutions make us better off. We don't spend enough time thinking about the ways in which those kinds of material advantages limit our options."

([Chapter 1](#), Page 36)

*Much of Gladwell's thesis centers on the fact that he believes too much time is spent focusing on the wrong things, or at least, on less effective things. Prestige is visual and conceptual more than it is practical. The title of "elite" should not be given to an institution unless it produces demonstrably elite products or students. Simply asking if there might be downsides to an institution can be enough to raise lines of questioning that can be illuminating.*

5. "Any fool can spend money. But to earn it and save it and defer gratification—then you learn to value it differently."

([Chapter 2](#), Page 45)

*Much like the discussions of the value and uses of power in Part 3, the man from Hollywood sees money in comparable manner. To earn wealth is simply to amass it, and that does not necessarily teach the lessons of hard work to the children of rich parents. Hard work from necessity is one of Gladwell's desirable difficulties, and he demonstrates that children who grow up with money might be at a disadvantage from those who have to struggle to make ends meet.*

6. "Small Ponds are welcoming places for those on the inside. They have all the support that comes from community and friendship."

([Chapter 3](#), Page 73)

*A Small Pond reduces the likelihood of anonymity for students. The bonds that are formed through familiarity reduce the competitiveness and self-centeredness that Sacks encountered among the cutthroat students at Brown University. If the instructors in a Small Pond are competent, there is no reason an elite student can't thrive there, even if the Small Pond lacks the prestige of a larger organization. Feeling welcome can be more important than being at an institution whose appeal is largely due to its influence or public image.*

7. "Innovators need to be disagreeable. By disagreeable, I don't mean obnoxious or unpleasant. I mean that on that fifth dimension of the Big Five personality inventory, 'agreeableness,' they tend to be on the far end of the continuum. They are people willing to take social risks—to do things that others might disapprove of."

([Chapter 4](#), Page 116)

*Gladwell cites several people who made breakthroughs as a result of their indifference to how others thought. This does not mean that they callously ignore the feelings and ideas of others. Rather, a disagreeable innovator is not afraid to try things that might be disagreed with or scoffed at. Disagreeable entrepreneurs perform their own experiments in pursuit of their own goals, and others benefit as a result.*

8. "As the playwright George Bernard Shaw once put it: "The reasonable man adapts himself to the world: the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man."

([Chapter 4](#), Page 117)

*Shaw's use of "unreasonable" is not meant to connote illogicality, naiveté, or foolishness. Someone who is overly reasonable in the sense Shaw is referring to might be incapable of thinking outside of orthodox sets of rules and traditions. After a system has been in place for long enough, innovations rarely spring from dated ways of thinking. Shaw's unreasonable man keeps looking for new solutions to old problems, even when what appear to be adequate solutions already exist.*

9. "A radical and transformative thought goes nowhere without the willingness to challenge convention."

([Chapter 4](#), Page 117)

*One of the characteristics of Gladwell's underdogs is that they put their ideas into practice. They do this at the risk of mockery, professional ruin, and sometimes, their own lives. If Joanne Jaffe had merely wondered if J-RIP could be a useful program, no one would have benefited from it. If Trocmé had considered whether helping to hide Jews was possible, but had given in to conventional wisdom instead, he would not have saved their lives at Le Chambon.*

10. "The contrast between the previous apprehension and the present relief and feeling of security promotes a self-confidence that is the very father and mother of courage."

([Chapter 5](#), Page 133)

*Many of Gladwell's underdogs are anxious about their circumstances. It is precisely because they continue to fight that they are able to overcome their apprehensiveness. Fear and anxiety can be examples of desirable difficulties if they lead to change and progress. Self-confidence is often a result of being afraid to try something unconventional but doing it anyway in order to achieve a desired result.*

11. "Courage is not something that you already have that makes you brave when the tough times start. Courage is what you earn when you've been through the tough times and you discover they aren't so tough after all."

([Chapter 5](#), Page 149)

*Colleagues and relatives of Freireich have no memory of a time when he wasn't brave. Gladwell's argument is that because he had to become brave at such a young age, Freireich made an indomitable physician who treated even the horrors of a childhood leukemia ward as something to be studied, not to be feared. He was able to work in an environment that was too psychologically difficult for most of his colleagues because of his life of hardship.*

12. "For every remote miss who becomes stronger, there are countless near misses who are crushed by what they have been through. There are times and places, however, when all of us depend on people who have been hardened by their experiences."

([Chapter 5](#), Page 161)

*Not every near miss results in a person of increased fortitude and resilience. However, Gladwell believes that we will inevitably benefit from the presence and actions of people who have been through trauma and overcome it. Freireich was able to save thousands of children's lives, and Gladwell asserts that his stubbornness and courage may be due to the bleak childhood he overcame. He was fearless because he was practiced in dealing with fear.*

13. "By the time the civil rights crusade came to Birmingham, African-Americans had spent a few hundred years learning how to cope with being outgunned and overmatched. Along the way they had learned a few things about battling giants."

([Chapter 6](#), Page 169)

*Like the Huguenots of Chapter 9, African-Americans were already well acquainted with improbable odds. They had no experience not being an underdog, so it was natural for them to think like underdogs. This would lead to Walker's use of trickery with the photographs and the attack dog that focused the nation's attention on Birmingham.*

14. "The idea embedded in the Brer Rabbit stories was that the weak could compete in even the most lopsided of contests if they were willing to use their wits."

([Chapter 6](#), Page 171)

*Brer Rabbit is the embodiment of the trickster folk hero whose temperament was so similar to that of Wyatt Walker. Like Brer Rabbit, Walker wasn't supposed to be able to win. This gave him a liberating sense of not having to obey the rules. His only chance—and the only chance of most like David—is to resort to cleverness and unusual*

*approaches that a giant cannot plan for.*

15. "We've got a movement. We've got a movement. We've had some police brutality."

([Chapter 6](#), Page 186)

*Walker is overjoyed when the police use dogs to attack the children at the church protest. This is a stark example of how desperately Walker wanted to win, and how an underdog must often focus solely on the result while avoiding the influence of how he is perceived by the public. Brutality against children was not worthy of celebration but striking a huge public relations blow against Southern oppressions was.*

16. "The trickster is not a trickster by nature. He is a trickster by necessity."

([Chapter 6](#), Page 188)

*Most like David do not choose the role of the underdog. It is unlikely that the shepherd boy ever would have sought out a giant for single combat unless he saw no other option. This is true of all of the other examples in the book. The innovations and victories of the underdogs are produced by situations that are thrust upon them, not by challenges that they have searched for and embraced.*

17. "Fundamental to our analysis is the assumption that the population, as individuals or groups, behaves 'rationally.'"

([Chapter 7](#), Page 201)

*One example of conventional thinking is the assumption that people behave rationally. Gladwell demonstrates in Chapter 7 that this is not always the case. Someone employing unconventional methods may seem irrational to the person who has always done things, or thought, in a certain way. But the results are often what prove whether someone was acting rationally or not.*

18. "If you were in a position of power, you didn't have to worry about how the lawmakers *felt* about what you were doing. You just had to be tough enough to make them think twice."

([Chapter 7](#), Page 201)

*This quote is from the report "Rebellion and Authority" by Leites and Wolf, Jr. It posits that the powerful do not have to consider the feelings of their subordinates, as long as they are willing to make a show of force. But this is disproven in the examples of the bombed Londoners, Ian Freeland, and the story of André Trocmé. Power could not make people submit, but it could make them more resilient.*

19. "It has been said that most revolutions are not caused by revolutionaries in the first place, but by the stupidity and brutality of governments."

([Chapter 7](#), Page 203)

*IRA chief of staff Seán Mac Stíofáin states that the IRA's existence could not have come about unless the government (which is a stand-in for any Goliath) had been smarter and less forceful. In his view, the government had made it impossible for revolutions not to exist because people could not be controlled indefinitely without believing*

*the legitimacy of the powerful.*

20. “When people in authority want the rest of us to behave, it matters—first and foremost—how they behave.”  
([Chapter 7](#), Page 207)

*Ian Freeland’s experience in Northern Ireland was a missed opportunity for the British Army. Because Freeland focused on being tough—and publicly being seen as tough—he quickly found himself at odds with the population he was there to protect. His behavior showed that he did not care about the people in Lower Falls, which led them to stop caring about him and the efforts of the British Army. This misuse of authority had dire consequences in Ireland during The Troubles of the 1970s.*

21. “You can’t concentrate on doing anything if you are thinking, ‘What’s gonna happen if it doesn’t go right?’”  
([Chapter 8](#), Page 241)

*This quote is from various criminals describing their mindset when planning—or in the midst of—committing a crime. Detering crime through harsher sentences does not account for this type of thinking. But there is a corollary in the example that extends to most of Gladwell’s underdogs: when they began their respective fights, they were not thinking about whether things would go wrong. They simply believed that a different approach was warranted where conventional means had failed.*

22. “[T]hey were not really afraid. They were just afraid of being afraid.”  
([Chapter 9](#), Page 269)

*In many of Gladwell’s examples, fear stifles creativity. The Huguenots had been so thoroughly persecuted for centuries by the time of the Blitzkrieg that being seen as fearful was their greatest fear. This courage allowed Trocmé to demonstrate the limits of the Nazis’ power. Once they realized that they could not make him show fear—because he had no fear of them—they did not know how to handle him. They had the power to crush him and his town but did not do so. In the case of Le Chambon, the Goliath of the German empire was defeated by an indifference to power.*

23. “The excessive use of force creates legitimacy problems, and force without legitimacy leads to defiance, not submission.”

([Chapter 9](#), Page 273)

*If an authority is not respected, it is not legitimate in the eyes of those over whom it exerts power. An illegitimate show of force—such as Ian Freeland in Northern Ireland or the Brownsville police before Jaffe started J-RIP—teaches resistance to power. As long as someone is defiant, even if they cannot show it overtly, that person will continue looking for ways to subvert an authoritarian system. This is why the Germans were unable to make Trocmé and his followers obey, despite their great force.*

24. “But so much of what is beautiful and valuable in the world comes from the shepherd, who has more strength and purpose than we ever imagine.”

([Chapter 9](#), Page 275)

*Throughout the book, shepherds can be seen as those who protect and nurture ideas. A shepherd protects what is important and helps it to survive. If certain ideas are lost because they were not helped along by shepherds like the underdogs, all who would benefit from the ideas' existence suffer. Gladwell's conclusions go beyond the individual victories of the characters in the book and have implications for human wellbeing on a global scale.*

25. "They grow in thickness, perhaps, and that is what I am doing."

([Chapter 9](#), Page 275)

*After Trocmé lost his adolescent son to suicide, he wrote that he had become crippled like a "decapitated" (274) tree. But this does not stop him. He continues growing in whichever way he can, even though he has been reduced to a trunk. It is this courage and adaptability that characterize him and all of the other people like David in the book. If he cannot grow upwards in the moment, he will find another way.*

## Essay Topics

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1. A frequent criticism of *David and Goliath* is that the anecdotes Gladwell provides do not support the conclusions he draws. Do you share the criticism? Why or why not?
2. Are you convinced by Gladwell's suggestion that dyslexia can be an advantage?
3. Does your life, or the life of anyone you know, have examples of the "remote misses" leading to an air of invulnerability in it? Discuss.
4. In your experience, do underdogs win as frequently as Gladwell suggests? Why or why not?
5. Think about your experience in school. Do you believe you would have done better with smaller or larger class sizes? Explain your reasoning.
6. After reading the book, would you choose to be an underdog? Justify your answer.
7. Which person in the book do you identify with most? Why?
8. What, if anything, do you think would improve *David and Goliath*?
9. Gladwell's advocates often point out that he is a journalist and not a scientist. How might this distinction alter the way you view the book?
10. Discuss a weakness in your own life that has become a strength.