

**AP English Language and Composition**  
**David and Goliath by Malcolm Gladwell - Summer Reading Assignment**

Introduction:

Malcolm Gladwell writes a nonfiction book that challenges our assumptions about power and weakness as well as disadvantages and advantages in life. As you read this book, you will also be introduced to the central AP English Language and Composition ideas of **rhetorical analysis** and **argumentation** through Gladwell's careful and consideration of the text of the Bible and subsequent walk through concepts from American and international history. Pay particular attention to how each claim Gladwell makes is backed by logical reasoning, anecdotal evidence, and/or science and how he maintains a solid line of reasoning by using good transitions and callbacks to previous points. All of these are AP skills you'll be practicing.

Assignment 1 (70 points):

★ **While you read, think critically about the following questions and provide well reasoned answers that are supported by specific examples from the text. Answers must be handwritten. Use of AI or plagiarism of other students', printed, or online work will result in a ZERO on this assignment.**

1. In the introduction, what are 3 specific pieces of evidence Gladwell uses to support the claim that David was NOT at a disadvantage against Goliath?

- a. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. What is one counter argument you could offer to the evidence he presented in question 1? In other words, identify a weakness in his argument.

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. **A.** In part 1, Ch1 subpart 2: What indicates that an underdog will win victory in an armed conflict, according to Ivan Arreguin-Toft? **B.** Draw conclusions: How have we seen this concept play out in American history?

- a. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Fill in the Boxes: **A.** Identify the “Davids” in the anecdotes that Gladwell uses as examples in Part 1, chapter 1 relating to basketball **B.** and in ch1 subpart 2 relating to a historic desert battle. What made each of them successful over the “Goliaths?” Use specific examples from the text to explain how exactly these “Davids” achieved success.

	“David” leader name	Strategies used to lead to success over “Goliaths”
A.		
B.		

5. According to Gladwell, why don’t all “Davids” use the same types of strategies to win as shown by the “Davids” of this chapter?

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6. In Ch 2, subpart 3-4, Gladwell discusses the concept of “more is not necessarily better” – explain this concept by paraphrasing Gladwell’s example of the man from Hollywood’s experience and opinion.

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7. Compare Gladwell’s ideas about class sizes in Chapter 2 to your school experiences in school so far.  
 a. Which class sizes have you felt that you learned more in? Why?

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- b. Reflect on your learning style - what environment (classroom teaching method) makes you feel (or would make you feel) most comfortable in the classroom?

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8. Pick one story from chapter 3 (Impressionists or Sacks) and determine how Gladwell's purpose is achieved through that anecdote and explanation. Use details from the text to support your analysis of Gladwell's explanation.

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9. Gladwell says in Ch 7, subpart 3, "When people in authority want the rest of us to behave, it matters – first and foremost – how *they* behave." Reflect: how do people in authority you respect or obey behave?

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10. Gladwell goes on to describe the principle of legitimacy" as being based on what **three** things in chapter 7 subpart 3?

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11. Fill in the Boxes: Each part of the book begins with a scripture reference. Name the scriptures referenced the the beginning of Part 2 and Part 3 as introductions (Part 1 has been done as an example, some details have been removed so as not to reveal the answers to earlier questions.) Then explain how you think that scripture relates to different key concepts in each part of the book, making reference to the key examples of those chapters.

Part:	Scripture reference:	How this/these verse(s) apply to the key concept of each part (each part has a different key concept.)
1.	Proverbs 13:7	This verse considers the concept of advantages and disadvantages as the title suggests. This verse, while potentially initially confusing, gradually comes clear as a reference to the idea that people traditionally thought of as advantaged may actually be disadvantaged in some way (ie the Hollywood

		man and parenting his children) and those who seem disadvantaged (like Redwood City) actually end up with an advantage. It also works well with the concept presented in Caroline Sacks' story, who thought that the supposedly advantaged choice was better than the other and found out she'd have potentially been better off choosing the other option. So, in a sense, the rich are really poor in some nonmaterial way while the poor have some richness comparatively, again not in finances but in hard work, experience, determination, innovation, etc.
2.		
3.		

(teacher use) \_\_\_\_/70

Assignment 2:

**Thoughtfully respond to the following prompt (30 points)**

Usually authors will finish a book with an overarching, concluding big-picture commentary. Gladwell does NOT do this. Keeping in mind the current final several paragraphs of the Afterword (before the footnotes and acknowledgements), write an alternate ending to this book that offers a summary of his main points and create a final "big picture" ending – use your own ideas and words but write as if from the author's perspective. Write 2-3 paragraphs.

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