

ESSAY 2 — RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF *Outliers*

Write a 500–800 word (2–3 page) essay that summarizes and critiques one chapter from Malcolm Gladwell’s *Outliers*.

Rhetorical Analysis

A *rhetorical analysis* examines a text closely to reveal how it works and what makes it an effective or infective piece of writing. Your analysis should identify the text under scrutiny, summarize it briefly, point out at least TWO rhetorical features that you find central to its effectiveness or ineffectiveness, and present your insights on these rhetorical features.

Think of your rhetorical analysis as a way to shine a spotlight on important aspects of your chosen chapter of *Outliers* and to make that chapter more understandable and more interesting for your reader.

Thesis

To give your rhetorical analysis focus, you need a thesis statement that avoids bland formulas like: “This chapter has some strengths and some weaknesses.” To avoid a vague thesis statement, focus on the complexity of the text, on the author’s strategies for persuading the target audience, and on the features that might weaken the argument’s persuasiveness for skeptical readers.

Here are some examples of strong thesis statements for a rhetorical analysis:

- Although the booklet *Compassionate Living* by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) uses the design features of layout, color, and image powerfully, its extreme examples, its quick dismissal of alternative views, and its failure to document the sources of its information weaken its appeal to *ethos* and its overall persuasiveness.
- In “Where I Lived and What I Lived For,” from *Walden*, Thoreau’s argument that society lacks spiritual reality because of its preoccupation with details and its frantic pace is convincing, especially to twenty-first century audiences; however Thoreau weakens his message by criticizing his readers and by completely dismissing technological advances.

STRUCTURE OF A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

Introduction (1 paragraph)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduces the issue and context for the section you will analyze.• Ends with a thesis statement.
Summary (1 paragraph)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provides a brief (150–200 words) summary of the section to help readers understand your analysis.
Analysis (2–3 paragraphs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supports and develops your thesis by presenting and evaluating at least TWO rhetorical strategies.
Conclusion (1 paragraph)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Briefly summarizes your thesis and comments on the significance of your analysis.

Quotations

To make your rhetorical analysis persuasive, you need to develop and support each point in your thesis with textual evidence in the form of examples or short quotations from *Outliers*. Use *attributive tags* to distinguish your ideas from those of the author. Use quotations from *Outliers* to direct the reader's attention to passages that help support your thesis. Never quote from the book without discussing what you're quoting and explaining how the quotation helps support your analysis.

Although your only source for this essay is your chosen section of *Outliers*, your essay must have a Work Cited page with full bibliographic information on the text and employ in-text citations and parenthetical references with page numbers. Use proper MLA style for formatting your document. (See drmarkwomack.com/mla-style/, especially "Document Format," "Anatomy of a Citation," and "How to Quote Prose.")

SCHEDULE FOR ESSAY 2 — RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF *Outliers*

Mind Map	February 21	Brainstorming Writing Exercise
Informal Outline	February 28	Outlining Writing Exercise
Peer Review Workshop	March 7	THREE copies of your First Draft.
Final Revision	March 28	Revised Draft, First Draft with Peer Reviews, Outline, and Mind Map (in a two-pocket folder with your name on the front cover).

Please Note

Since this essay builds on the skills you learned from writing your first essay, everything the assignment sheet for that essay said about Thesis, Evidence, Structure, Style, Audience, Drafts, Proofreading, Evaluation, and so on applies to this essay too.

The following questions may help you focus your rhetorical analysis and create a strong thesis statement.

QUESTIONS FOR RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the writer's purpose?• Who is the intended audience?• What assumptions, values, and beliefs would readers have to hold to find this argument persuasive?
<i>Logos</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the argument's main claim (either explicitly stated or implied)?• What specific evidence supports the main claim?• How is the argument supported and developed?
<i>Ethos</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How does the writer try to seem credible and trustworthy?• How fair-minded or biased does the writer seem to you?• How knowledgeable does the writer seem in the use of evidence and the response to opposing or alternative views?
<i>Pathos</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What concrete examples or metaphors does the writer employ?• How does the writer appeal to the values and beliefs of the audience?• What emotional response does the writer evoke?
Style	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How do the writer's language choices, sentence length, and complexity contribute to the text's impact?• How well does the writer's tone (attitude toward the subject) suit the argument?