In *Outliers*, Malcom Gladwell takes on the topic of “success” and the book is a collection of vignettes he uses to demonstrate that “there is something profoundly wrong with the way we make sense of success.” Gladwell argues that it is not enough to ask what successful people are like; he also wants us to think about where they are from and what “hidden advantages and extraordinary opportunities and cultural legacies” are behind their individual stories. Gladwell’s argument may sound familiar to Marines, who understand fundamentally that no individual stands alone. Rather, his or her success is constantly shaped by fellow Marines, leaders, shared hardships, and traditions that make up the Corps.

Gladwell drives his argument home with historical examples, results of psychological experiments, and creative story-telling. For the Non-Commissioned Officer, the chapter “The 10,000-hour Rule” will resonate. Here, Gladwell looks no further than the Beatles and Bill Gates to prove the age-old cliché, “practice makes perfect,” a lesson that applies to mastering marksmanship as much as playing an instrument or programming a computer. For leaders of Marines, the chapter on the “Ethnic Theory of Plane Crashes” uses examples taken from airline accidents where terrible errors traced to communication failures between subordinates and their officers. Military specialists, like CWOs, can learn from Gladwell’s cautionary tales on “genius.” Marines will no doubt recognize shades of themselves in the book and can easily relate personal experiences to Gladwell’s engaging and descriptive vignettes.

*Outliers* is a jumping-off point for deeper thought into the nature of success. More importantly, the book cautions us to look more closely at “conventional wisdom.” For instance, people seem to assume that The Beatles’ innate musical talent led to their meteoric popularity. However, Gladwell reveals what the Beatles did from 1960 to 1962, before their first big hit, and in doing so, invites the reader to think beyond simplistic cause-and-effect explanations. Astute readers of this book will not accept all of Gladwell’s arguments at face value. Some chapters that address success among a group can be problematic. Marines who read and discuss this book might think about whether Gladwell’s arguments are equally strong when applied to nationalities or culture groups, rather than individuals. Marines may also be intrigued by the scientific experiments Gladwell describes and may choose to read one of the original research studies and its findings. Through this additional investigation, Marines may gain greater insight into Gladwell’s conclusions. One of Gladwell’s greatest strengths is his ability to question popular opinion in his book. Marine Non-Commissioned Officers, Chief Warrant Officers and company-grade officers will find that *Outliers* is easy to read, engaging, and a useful template for thinking about deeper answers to simple questions like “what makes a person successful?”