

# Lesson: **Outliers: Can We Fix Our Educational System?**

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### Grade Level: **High School**

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#### Essential Question:

How can our educational system be fixed?

#### Project and Purpose:

Students use evidence from videos, a lecture, and articles to develop an argument for their final assessment for *Outliers*.

#### Standards and Objectives:

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.1**  
Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.b**  
Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.

Students use evidence from multiple resources to write an argumentative essay on whether or not formal education is the path to success.

#### Materials:

- Book: *Outliers* by Malcolm Gladwell
- Video: Standardized Testing is Not Teaching [www.youtube.com/watch?v=dPs46yOcwP0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dPs46yOcwP0)
- Copies of article, "Rage Against the Common Core" by David L. Kirp from the New York Times, December 27, 2014, [www.nytimes.com/2014/12/28/opinion/sunday/rage-against-the-common-core.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/28/opinion/sunday/rage-against-the-common-core.html?_r=0)
- Video: Ken Robinson's Ted Talk "How to Escape Education's Death Valley?" [www.ted.com/talks/ken\\_robinson\\_how\\_to\\_escape\\_education\\_s\\_death\\_valley/transcript?language=en](http://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_how_to_escape_education_s_death_valley/transcript?language=en)
- Paper and writing materials OR access to writing program on computer

## Procedure:

- 1. Do now:** Have students write a brief response to the following: Who is most responsible for our current educational crisis? Explain.
2. Have students share with class.
- 3. Show the video Video:** Standardized Testing is Not Teaching, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=dPs46yOcwP0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dPs46yOcwP0)
- 4. Ask students:** What is the problem that Tinken is presenting? Is his solution compelling? Why or why not?
- 5. Saying/Doing:** “Rage Against the Common Core.” Students annotate the article using the annotation strategy of saying / doing: chunk the text; summarize on the left margin; react / question / connect on the right hand margin; underline and circle unknown words.
- 6. Ask students the following:**
  - What are some criticisms brought up by this author?
  - Which side (for or against) raising standards — i.e. Common Core — do you stand? Explain why.
7. Show video of Ken Robinson’s Ted Talk, “How to Escape Education’s Death Valley?” [www.ted.com/talks/ken\\_robinson\\_how\\_to\\_escape\\_education\\_s\\_death\\_valley/transcript?language=en](http://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_how_to_escape_education_s_death_valley/transcript?language=en)
8. Students write their initial response to the final assessment task and give their initial rationale. The final assessment task asks students to articulate whether or not they think formal education is the path to success.
- 9. Squad Talk:** What is your initial claim to the final assessment? Why? (**Note:** Squads are composed heterogeneously, created with a specific focus on designing groups of students with diverse opinions. They are bigger than small groups and composed of 6–8 students. Within groups, one student takes a running record of what students discuss.)
- 10. Small Group Work:** What information will I need in order to prove my point? (**Note:** Similarly, small groups are composed heterogeneously, created with a specific focus on designing groups of students with diverse opinions. They will discuss and give each other feedback on what evidence best supports their various theses.)
11. Share out.

## Conclusion:

**The Drive:** As designed by designated student. The Drive is a student-developed wrap-up discussion question. Each student selected designs his/her own content-relevant discussion question that he/she then facilitates at the end of the class.