

# Chasing Success



Success may be sweet, but as this collection shows, it sometimes requires great sacrifice.



COLLECTION

## PERFORMANCE TASK Preview

At the end of this collection, you will have the opportunity to complete two tasks:

- Debate with classmates the merits of extending the school year to provide more time for learning, citing evidence from texts in the collection.
- Write an essay in which you compare and contrast the experiences of two characters or people from the texts, focusing on the sacrifices they make to succeed.

## ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

Study the words and their definitions in the chart below. You will use these words as you discuss and write about the texts in this collection.

Word	Definition	Related Forms
<b>accumulate</b> (ə-kyoom'yə-lāt') v.	to gather or pile up	accumulation, accumulative
<b>appreciation</b> (ə-prē'shē-ā'shən) n.	recognition of the quality, significance, or value of someone or something	appreciable, appreciate, appreciative
<b>conform</b> (kən-fōrm') v.	to be similar to or match something or someone; to act or be in accord or agreement	conformable, conformance, conformation, conformist, conformity
<b>persistence</b> (pər-sīs'təns) n.	the act or quality of holding firmly to a purpose or task in spite of obstacles	persist, persistency, persistent
<b>reinforce</b> (rē'ɪn-fōrs') v.	to strengthen; to give more force to	reinforcement, reinforcer



**Malcolm Gladwell** (b. 1963) was born to an English father and a Jamaican mother. He grew up in rural Ontario, Canada. The author of several bestselling books, he is a staff writer for *The New Yorker*. Gladwell typically analyzes aspects of daily life, offering intriguing ideas about social phenomena and human behavior. "Marita's Bargain" is excerpted from Gladwell's third book, *Outliers: The Story of Success*, in which he explores the reasons why some people achieve success and others do not.

# Marita's Bargain



Essay by Malcolm Gladwell

**AS YOU READ** Pay attention to details that describe KIPP students. Write down any questions you generate during reading.

In the mid-1990s, an experimental public school called the KIPP Academy opened on the fourth floor of Lou Gehrig Junior High School in New York City.<sup>1</sup> Lou Gehrig is in the seventh school district, otherwise known as the South Bronx, one of the poorest neighborhoods in New York City. It is a squat, gray 1960s-era building across the street from a bleak-looking group of high-rises. A few blocks over is Grand Concourse, the borough's main thoroughfare. These are not streets that you'd happily walk down, alone, after dark.

KIPP is a middle school. Classes are large: the fifth grade has two sections of thirty-five students each. There are no entrance exams or admissions requirements. Students are chosen by lottery, with any fourth grader living in the Bronx eligible to apply. Roughly half of the students are African American; the rest are Hispanic. Three-quarters of the children come from single-parent homes. Ninety percent qualify for "free or reduced lunch," which is to say that their families earn

<sup>1</sup> KIPP: "Knowledge Is Power Program," a national organization of charter schools.

Image Credits: ©Edd Westmacott/Photostock/Getty Images

so little that the federal government chips in so the children can eat properly at lunchtime.

KIPP Academy seems like the kind of school in the kind of neighborhood with the kind of student that would make educators despair—except that the minute you enter the building, it's clear that something is different. The students walk quietly down the hallways in single file. In the classroom, they are taught to turn and address anyone talking to them in a protocol known as "SSLANT": smile, sit up, listen, ask questions, nod when being spoken to, and track with your eyes. On the walls of the school's corridors are hundreds of pennants from the colleges that KIPP graduates have gone on to attend. Last year, hundreds of families from across the Bronx entered the lottery for KIPP's two fifth-grade classes. It is no exaggeration to say that just over ten years into its existence, KIPP has become one of the most desirable public schools in New York City.

What KIPP is most famous for is mathematics. In the South Bronx, only about 16 percent of all middle school students are performing at or above their grade level in math. But at KIPP, by the end of fifth grade, many of the students call math their favorite subject. In seventh grade, KIPP students start *high school* algebra. By the end of eighth grade, 84 percent of the students are performing at or above their grade level, which is to say that this motley group of randomly chosen lower-income kids from dingy apartments in one of the country's worst neighborhoods—whose parents, in an overwhelming number of cases, never set foot in a college—do as well in mathematics as the privileged eighth graders of America's wealthy suburbs. "Our kids' reading is on point," said David Levin, who founded KIPP with a fellow teacher, Michael Feinberg, in 1994. "They struggle a little bit with writing skills. But when they leave here, they rock in math."

There are now more than fifty KIPP schools across the United States, with more on the way. The KIPP program represents one of the most promising new educational philosophies in the United States. But its success is best understood not in terms of its curriculum, its teachers, its resources, or some kind of institutional innovation. KIPP is, rather, an organization that has succeeded by taking the idea of cultural legacies seriously.

In the early nineteenth century, a group of reformers set out to establish a system of public education in the United States. What passed for public school at the time was a haphazard assortment of locally run one-room schoolhouses and overcrowded urban classrooms scattered around the country. In rural areas, schools closed in the spring and fall and ran all summer long, so that children could help out in the busy planting and harvesting seasons. In the city, many schools mirrored the long and chaotic schedules of the children's working-class parents. The reformers wanted to make sure that all

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children went to school and that public school was comprehensive, meaning that all children got enough schooling to learn how to read and write and do basic arithmetic and function as productive citizens.

But as the historian Kenneth Gold has pointed out, the early educational reformers were also tremendously concerned that children not get *too much* schooling. In 1871, for example, the US commissioner of education published a report by Edward Jarvis on the "Relation of Education to Insanity." Jarvis had studied 1,741 cases of insanity and concluded that "over-study" was responsible for 205 of them. "Education lays the foundation of a large portion of the causes of mental disorder," Jarvis wrote. Similarly, the pioneer of public education in Massachusetts, Horace Mann, believed that working students too hard would create a "most pernicious influence upon character and habits. . . . Not infrequently is health itself destroyed by overstimulating the mind." In the education journals of the day, there were constant worries about overtaxing students or blunting their natural abilities through too much schoolwork.

The reformers, Gold writes:

strove for ways to reduce time spent studying, because long periods of respite could save the mind from injury. Hence the elimination of Saturday classes, the shortening of the school day, and the lengthening of vacation—all of which occurred over the course of the nineteenth century. Teachers were cautioned that "when [students] are required to study, their bodies should not be exhausted by long confinement, nor their minds bewildered by prolonged application." Rest also presented particular opportunities for strengthening cognitive and analytical skills. As one contributor to the *Massachusetts Teacher* suggested, "it is when thus relieved from the state of tension belonging to actual study that boys and girls, as well as men and women, acquire the habit of thought and reflection, and of forming their own conclusions, independently of what they are taught and the authority of others."

**motley**  
(mōt'lē) *adj.*  
unusually varied or mixed.

**cognitive**  
(kōg'nī-tīv) *adj.*  
related to knowledge or understanding.

This idea—that effort must be balanced by rest—could not be more different from Asian notions about study and work, of course. But then again, the Asian worldview was shaped by the rice paddy. In the Pearl River Delta, the rice farmer planted two and sometimes three crops a year.<sup>2</sup> The land was fallow only briefly. In fact, one of the singular features of rice cultivation is that because of the nutrients carried by the water used in irrigation, the more a plot of land is cultivated, the more fertile it gets.

But in Western agriculture, the opposite is true. Unless a wheat- or cornfield is left fallow every few years, the soil becomes exhausted. Every winter, fields are empty. The hard labor of spring planting and fall harvesting is followed, like clockwork, by the slower pace of summer and winter. This is the logic the reformers applied to the cultivation of young minds. We formulate new ideas by analogy, working from what we know toward what we don't know, and what the reformers knew were the rhythms of the agricultural seasons. A mind must be cultivated. But not too much, lest it be exhausted. And what was the remedy for the dangers of exhaustion? The long summer vacation—a peculiar and distinctive American legacy that has had profound consequences for the learning patterns of the students of the present day.

Summer vacation is a topic seldom mentioned in American educational debates. It is considered a permanent and **inviolable** feature of school life, like high school football or the senior prom. But take a look at the following sets of elementary school test-score results, and see if your faith in the value of long summer holidays isn't profoundly shaken.

These numbers come from research led by the Johns Hopkins University sociologist Karl Alexander. Alexander tracked the progress of 650 first graders from the Baltimore public school system, looking at how they scored on a widely used math- and reading-skills exam called the California Achievement Test. These are reading scores for the first five years of elementary school, broken down by socioeconomic class—low, middle, and high.

Class	1st Grade	2nd Grade	3rd Grade	4th Grade	5th Grade
Low	329	375	397	433	461
Middle	348	388	425	467	497
High	361	418	460	506	534

Look at the first column. The students start in first grade with meaningful, but not overwhelming, differences in their knowledge and

<sup>2</sup> **rice paddy . . . three crops a year:** The Pearl River Delta is an area in southeastern China where the Pearl River enters the South China Sea. It contains many rice paddies, flooded land used to grow rice.

ability. The first graders from the wealthiest homes have a 32-point advantage over the first graders from the poorest homes—and by the way, first graders from poor homes in Baltimore are *really* poor. Now look at the fifth-grade column. By that point, four years later, the initially modest gap between rich and poor has more than doubled.

This “achievement gap” is a phenomenon that has been observed over and over again, and it typically provokes one of two responses. The first response is that disadvantaged kids simply don't have the same inherent ability to learn as children from more privileged backgrounds. They're not as smart. The second, slightly more optimistic conclusion is that, in some way, our schools are failing poor children: we simply aren't doing a good enough job of teaching them the skills they need. But here's where Alexander's study gets interesting, because it turns out that neither of those explanations rings true.

The city of Baltimore didn't give its kids the California Achievement Test just at the end of every school year, in June. It gave them the test in September too, just after summer vacation ended. What Alexander realized is that the second set of test results allowed him to do a slightly different analysis. If he looked at the difference between the score a student got at the beginning of the school year, in September, and the score he or she got the following June, he could measure—precisely—how much that student learned over the school year. And if he looked at the difference between a student's score in June and then in the following September, he could see how much that student learned over the course of the summer. In other words, he could figure out—at least in part—how much of the achievement gap is the result of things that happen during the school year, and how much it has to do with what happens during summer vacation.

Let's start with the school-year gains. This table shows how many points students' test scores rose from the time they started classes in September to the time they stopped in June. The “Total” column represents their cumulative classroom learning from all five years of elementary school.

Class	1st Grade	2nd Grade	3rd Grade	4th Grade	5th Grade	Total
Low	55	46	30	33	25	189
Middle	69	43	34	41	27	214
High	60	39	34	28	23	184

Here is a completely different story from the one suggested by the first table. The first set of test results made it look like lower-income kids were somehow failing in the classroom. But here we see plainly that isn't true. Look at the “Total” column. Over the course of five years of elementary school, poor kids “out-learn” the wealthiest kids

**inviolable**  
(in-vī'ə-lee) *adj.*  
secure against  
change or violation.

170 189 points to 184 points. They lag behind the middle-class kids by only a modest amount, and, in fact, in one year, second grade, they learn more than the middle- or upper-class kids.

Next, let's see what happens if we look just at how reading scores change during summer vacation.

Class	After 1st	After 2nd	After 3rd	After 4th	Total
Low	-3.67	-1.70	2.74	2.89	0.26
Middle	-3.11	4.18	3.68	2.34	7.09
High	15.38	9.22	14.51	13.38	52.49

Do you see the difference? Look at the first column, which measures what happens over the summer after first grade. The wealthiest kids come back in September and their reading scores have jumped more than 15 points. The poorest kids come back from the holidays and their reading scores have *dropped* almost 4 points. Poor kids may out-learn rich kids during the school year. But during the summer, they fall far behind.

Now take a look at the last column, which totals up all the summer gains from first grade to fifth grade. The reading scores of the poor kids go up by .26 points. *When it comes to reading skills, poor kids learn nothing when school is not in session.* The reading scores of the rich kids, by contrast, go up by a whopping 52.49 points. Virtually all of the advantage that wealthy students have over poor students is the result of differences in the way privileged kids learn while they are *not* in school. . . .

180 What Alexander's work suggests is that the way in which education has been discussed in the United States is backwards. An enormous amount of time is spent talking about reducing class size, rewriting curricula, buying every student a shiny new laptop, and increasing school funding—all of which assumes that there is something fundamentally wrong with the job schools are doing. But look back at the second table, which shows what happens between September and June. Schools *work*. The only problem with school, for the kids who aren't achieving, is that there isn't enough of it.

Alexander, in fact, has done a very simple calculation to demonstrate what would happen if the children of Baltimore went to school year-round. The answer is that poor kids and wealthy kids would, by the end of elementary school, be doing math and reading at almost the same level.

Suddenly the causes of Asian math superiority become even more obvious. Students in Asian schools don't have long summer vacations. Why would they? Cultures that believe that the route to success lies in rising before dawn 360 days a year are scarcely going to give their children three straight months off in the summer. The school year

in the United States is, on average, 180 days long. The South Korean school year is 220 days long. The Japanese school year is 243 days long.

210 One of the questions asked of test takers on a recent math test given to students around the world was how many of the algebra, calculus, and geometry questions covered subject matter that they had previously learned in class. For Japanese twelfth graders, the answer was 92 percent. That's the value of going to school 243 days a year. You have the time to learn everything that needs to be learned—and you have less time to unlearn it. For American twelfth graders, the comparable figure was 54 percent. For its poorest students, America doesn't have a school problem. It has a summer vacation problem, and that's the problem the KIPP schools set out to solve. They decided to bring the lessons of the rice paddy to the American inner city.



230 "They start school at seven twenty-five," says David Levin of the students at the Bronx KIPP Academy. "They all do a course called thinking skills until seven fifty-five. They do ninety minutes of English, ninety minutes of math every day, except in fifth grade, where they do two hours of math a day. An hour of science, an hour of social science, an hour of music at least twice a week, and then you have an hour and fifteen minutes of orchestra on top of that. Everyone does orchestra. The day goes from seven twenty-five until five p.m. After five, there are homework clubs, detention, sports teams. There are kids here from seven twenty-five until seven p.m. If you take an average

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day, and you take out lunch and recess, our kids are spending fifty to sixty percent more time learning than the traditional public school student."

Levin was standing in the school's main hallway. It was lunchtime and the students were trooping by quietly in orderly lines, all of them in their KIPP Academy shirts. Levin stopped a girl whose shirttail was out. "Do me a favor, when you get a chance," he called out, miming a tucking-in movement. He continued: "Saturdays they come in nine to  
240 one. In the summer, it's eight to two." By summer, Levin was referring to the fact that KIPP students do three extra weeks of school, in July. These are, after all, precisely the kind of lower-income kids who Alexander identified as losing ground over the long summer vacation, so KIPP's response is simply to not have a long summer vacation.

"The beginning is hard," he went on. "By the end of the day they're restless. Part of it is endurance, part of it is motivation. Part of it is incentives and rewards and fun stuff. Part of it is good old-fashioned discipline. You throw all of that into the stew. We talk a lot here about grit and self-control. The kids know what those words mean."

Levin walked down the hall to an eighth-grade math class and stood quietly in the back. A student named Aaron was at the front of the class, working his way through a problem from the page of thinking-skills exercises that all KIPP students are required to do each morning. The teacher, a ponytailed man in his thirties named Frank Corcoran, sat in a chair to the side, only occasionally jumping in to guide the discussion. It was the kind of scene repeated every day in American classrooms—with one difference. Aaron was up at the front, working on that single problem, for *twenty* minutes—methodically, carefully, with the participation of the class, working his way through  
260 not just the answer but also the question of whether there was more than one way to get the answer. . . .

"What that extra time does is allow for a more relaxed atmosphere," Corcoran said, after the class was over. "I find that the problem with math education is the sink-or-swim approach. Everything is rapid fire, and the kids who get it first are the ones who are rewarded. So there comes to be a feeling that there are people who can do math and there are people who aren't math people. I think that extended amount of time gives you the chance as a teacher to explain things, and more time for the kids to sit and digest everything  
270 that's going on—to review, to do things at a much slower pace. It seems counterintuitive but we do things at a slower pace and as a result we get through a lot more. There's a lot more retention, better understanding of the material. It lets me be a little bit more relaxed. We have time to have games. Kids can ask any questions they want, and if I'm explaining something, I don't feel pressed for time. I can go back over material and not feel time pressure." The extra time gave Corcoran the chance to make mathematics *meaningful*: to let his students see the clear relationship between effort and reward.



On the walls of the classroom were dozens of certificates from the  
280 New York State Regents exam, testifying to first-class honors for Corcoran's students. "We had a girl in this class," Corcoran said. "She was a horrible math student in fifth grade. She cried every Saturday when we did remedial stuff. Huge tears and tears." At the memory, Corcoran got a little emotional himself. He looked down. "She just e-mailed us a couple weeks ago. She's in college now. She's an accounting major."

The story of the miracle school that transforms losers into winners is, of course, all too familiar. It's the stuff of inspirational books and sentimental Hollywood movies. But the reality of places like KIPP is  
290 a good deal less glamorous than that. To get a sense of what 50 to 60 percent more learning time means, listen to the typical day in the life of a KIPP student.

The student's name is Marita. She's an only child who lives in a single-parent home. Her mother never went to college. The two of them share a one-bedroom apartment in the Bronx. Marita used to go to a parochial school down the street from her home, until her mother heard of KIPP. "When I was in fourth grade, me and one of my other friends, Tanya, we both applied to KIPP," Marita said. "I remember Miss Owens. She interviewed me, and the way she was saying made it  
300 sound so hard I thought I was going to prison. I almost started crying.

**counterintuitive**  
(koun'tər-īn-tōō'ī-tīv) *adj.* contrary to what one expects.

Image Credits: ©Andrew Lichtenstein/Corbis

“Our kids are spending fifty to sixty percent more time learning than the traditional public school student.”

And she was like, If you don't want to sign this, you don't have to sign this. But then my mom was right there, so I signed it.”

With that, her life changed. (Keep in mind, while reading what follows, that Marita is twelve years old.)

“I wake up at five-forty-five a.m. to get a head start,” she says. “I brush my teeth, shower. I get some breakfast at school, if I am running late. Usually get yelled at because I am taking too long. I meet my friends Diana and Steven at the bus stop, and we get the number one bus.”

310 A 5:45 wakeup is fairly typical of KIPP students, especially given the long bus and subway commutes that many have to get to school. Levin, at one point, went into a seventh-grade music class with seventy kids in it and asked for a show of hands on when the students woke up. A handful said they woke up after six. Three quarters said they woke up before six. And almost half said they woke up before 5:30. One classmate of Marita's, a boy named José, said he sometimes wakes up at three or four a.m., finishes his homework from the night before, and then “goes back to sleep for a bit.”

Marita went on:

320 I leave school at five p.m., and if I don't lollygag around, then I will get home around five-thirty. Then I say hi to my mom really quickly and start my homework. And if it's not a lot of homework that day, it will take me two to three hours, and I'll be done around nine p.m. Or if we have essays, then I will be done like ten p.m., or ten-thirty p.m.

Sometimes my mom makes me break for dinner. I tell her I want to go straight through, but she says I have to eat. So around eight, she makes me break for dinner for, like, a half hour, and then I get back to work. Then, usually after that, my mom wants to hear  
330 about school, but I have to make it quick because I have to get into bed by eleven p.m. So I get all my stuff ready, and then I get into bed. I tell her all about the day and what happened, and by

the time we are finished, she is on the brink of sleeping, so that's probably around eleven-fifteen. Then I go to sleep, and the next morning we do it all over again. We are in the same room. But it's a huge bedroom and you can split it into two, and we have beds on other sides. Me and my mom are very close.

She spoke in the matter-of-fact way of children who have no way of knowing how unusual their situation is. She had the hours of a  
340 lawyer trying to make partner, or of a medical resident. All that was missing were the dark circles under her eyes and a steaming cup of coffee, except that she was too young for either.

“Sometimes I don't go to sleep when I'm supposed to,” Marita continued. “I go to sleep at, like, twelve o'clock, and the next afternoon, it will hit me. And I will doze off in class. But then I have to wake up because I have to get the information. I remember I was in one class, and I was dozing off and the teacher saw me and said, ‘Can I talk to you after class?’ And he asked me, ‘Why were you dozing off?’ And I told him I went to sleep late. And he was, like, ‘You need to go to  
350 sleep earlier.’”

Marita's life is not the life of a typical twelve-year-old. Nor is it what we would necessarily wish for a twelve-year-old. Children, we like to believe, should have time to play and dream, and sleep. Marita has responsibilities. . . . Her community does not give her what she needs. So what does she have to do? Give up her evenings and weekends and friends—all the elements of her old world—and replace them with KIPP.

Here is Marita again, in a passage that is little short of heartbreaking:

360 Well, when we first started fifth grade, I used to have contact with one of the girls from my old school, and whenever I left school on Friday, I would go to her house and stay there until my mom would get home from work. So I would be at her house and I would be doing my homework. She would never have any homework. And she would say, “Oh, my God, you stay there late.” Then she said she wanted to go to KIPP, but then she would say that KIPP is too hard and she didn't want to do it. And I would say, “Everyone says that KIPP is hard, but once you get the hang of it, it's not really that hard.” She told me, “It's because you are smart.” And I said, “No, every one of us is smart.” And she was  
370 so discouraged because we stayed until five and we had a lot of homework, and I told her that us having a lot of homework helps us do better in class. And she told me she didn't want to hear the whole speech. All my friends now are from KIPP.

Is this a lot to ask of a child? It is. But think of things from Marita's perspective. She has made a bargain with her school. She will get up at five-forty-five in the morning, go in on Saturdays, and do homework until eleven at night. In return, KIPP promises that it will take kids like her who are stuck in poverty and give them a chance to get out. It will get 84 percent of them up to or above their grade level in mathematics. On the strength of that performance, 90 percent of KIPP students get scholarships to private or parochial high schools instead of having to attend their own **desultory** high schools in the Bronx. And on the strength of that high school experience, more than 80 percent of KIPP graduates will go on to college, in many cases being the first in their family to do so. . . .

Marita doesn't need a brand-new school with acres of playing fields and gleaming facilities. She doesn't need a laptop, a smaller class, a teacher with a PhD, or a bigger apartment. She doesn't need a higher IQ or a mind as quick as Chris Langan's. All those things would be nice, of course. But they miss the point. Marita just needed a *chance*. And look at the chance she was given! Someone brought a little bit of the rice paddy to the South Bronx and explained to her the miracle of meaningful work.

**COLLABORATIVE DISCUSSION** Are KIPP students different from other public school students? With a partner, discuss the qualities that KIPP students possess and how their circumstances distinguish them from other students. Cite evidence from the text to support your views.

**desultory**  
(dēs'əl-tōr'ē) *adj.*  
lacking a fixed plan.

## Determine Central Ideas

COMMON CORE RI.2

A **central idea** is an important idea or message that an author wants to convey. Although a central idea may be stated, more often readers must infer it from details in the text. Use these steps to identify the central ideas in "Marita's Bargain":

- Identify the **topic** of the work. The central ideas present insights or perspectives on this subject. Gladwell's broad topic is education; more specifically, he explores the impact of an experimental kind of public school on students.
- Analyze the **details** used to develop the discussion. Consider the kind of information these details present and how they reveal the author's view of the subject. For example, the facts, examples, and quotations about the rigorous schedule of KIPP Academy support Gladwell's opinion about this educational approach.
- Use subheadings, the title, and other **text features** as clues to help identify central ideas.
- Evaluate how the organization, or **structure**, of the work helps develop important ideas. For example, Gladwell devotes the last two sections of his essay to Marita's story, suggesting that he wants to convey a specific idea about the hard work that goes into achieving success.

## Integrate and Evaluate Information

COMMON CORE RI.7

Information can be presented in a variety of formats and media, including maps, photographs, diagrams, charts, and video. **Quantitative formats**, which present numerical or statistical data, include tables and graphs, such as line graphs, bar graphs, and circle graphs. In "Marita's Bargain," Gladwell uses several **tables** to support his ideas. To analyze the information in a table, follow these steps:

- If the table has a title, read it to see what the table is about. Gladwell's tables do not have titles, but he introduces each one in the text immediately before it.
- Read the labels on the columns and rows, and make sure you understand what they mean. For example, the label "Class" in Gladwell's tables refers to the socioeconomic class of each group of students. The row labels divide the students into three groups: low, middle, and high.
- Scan the numbers to identify any obvious trends. Look across each row from left to right, and read each column from top to bottom. Do the numbers grow consistently larger or smaller? What might this mean?
- Read what the text says about the table. Gladwell follows each table with an explanation of the conclusions he draws from it. Then review the numbers in the table again to see if you agree with the author's interpretation.

## Analyzing the Text

COMMON CORE  
RI 1, RI 2, RI 4,  
RI 5, RI 7, W 3a,  
W 3d

**Cite Text Evidence** Support your responses with evidence from the selection.

- 1. Connect** This essay originally appeared in a book that explores whether success comes more from talent or opportunity. Based on the details in section 1 (lines 1–52), what does Gladwell believe about the success of students enrolled in the KIPP Academy?
- 2. Analyze** Gladwell examines the history of the U.S. public school system in section 2 (lines 53–115) before he discusses summer vacation in section 3 (lines 116–221). How do the ideas and information in section 2 support his discussion in section 3?
- 3. Evaluate** What is the function of the tables in section 3 (lines 116–221)? Are they effective in conveying Gladwell's central idea in this part of the essay? Explain why or why not.
- 4. Cite Evidence** Is the success of the KIPP Academy based solely on the extended school day and year? Cite evidence from the essay to support your conclusion.
- 5. Analyze** What is Gladwell's purpose in the last part of the essay? How does he achieve this purpose? Support your explanation with specific details from the text.
- 6. Summarize** What are the central ideas of Gladwell's essay? Summarize these ideas in two or three sentences.
- 7. Draw Conclusions** Why does Gladwell use the word "bargain" instead of "agreement" or "deal"? Explain how the connotation of this word helps to reinforce readers' understanding of Gladwell's perspective on the KIPP Academy.
- 8. Synthesize** One critic suggested that "Marita's Bargain" and other essays in *Outliers* made it a more "political" book than his others. Does "Marita's Bargain" have a political message? Why or why not?

### PERFORMANCE TASK



**Writing Activity: Diary** Gladwell describes how attending the KIPP Academy has affected Marita's relationships with her old friends who do not go to the school. Write a diary entry in which she reflects on the change in these friendships. Consider the following:

- Marita's feelings about the importance of succeeding in school
- the reaction of her old friends to the demands of the Kipp Academy
- the amount of free time Marita has outside of school
- Marita's relationship with her mother

## Critical Vocabulary

COMMON CORE L 4a

motley

inviolate

desultory

cognitive

counterintuitive

**Practice and Apply** Complete each of the following sentence stems in a way that reflects the meaning of the Critical Vocabulary word.

1. Going to bed at a later hour to cure insomnia seems *counterintuitive* because . . .
2. The costumes worn by a harlequin or clown are described as *motley* because . . .
3. The town hall meeting was *desultory* because . . .
4. The trainer tested the player's *cognitive* skills after the concussion because . . .
5. The bank deposits were *inviolate* because . . .

### Vocabulary Strategy: Context Clues

The context of an unfamiliar word—other words, sentences, and paragraphs around the word—often gives clues to its meaning. For example, the Critical Vocabulary word *motley* occurs in this context in the essay: "this motley group of randomly chosen lower-income kids from dingy apartments." The chart shows the kinds of context clues you could use to figure out the meaning of *motley* and other challenging words.

<b>Synonym</b>	A word or phrase before or after the unknown term has the same meaning. For example, the phrase "randomly chosen" suggests that <i>motley</i> means "varied" or "different from each other."
<b>Example</b>	The context may include examples that help illustrate a word's meaning. For example, Gladwell writes that summer vacation is an "inviolate feature of school life, like high school football or the senior prom." The examples that follow the signal word <i>like</i> suggest that <i>inviolate</i> means "secure against change."
<b>Antonym</b>	Sometimes a word that is the opposite of the unknown term appears in the context. This relationship is signaled by <i>but</i> or <i>unlike</i> . For example in this sentence, the word <i>organized</i> is the opposite of <i>desultory</i> : "Unlike her organized speech, his was desultory."
<b>Restatement</b>	Look for a restatement of a word's meaning before or after it. For example, "The house painter's efforts were desultory—rather hit or miss—making us wonder if the job would ever be completed."

**Practice and Apply** Find each of these words in the selection. Define it and explain the context clues that help you identify its meaning as it is used in the essay.

1. protocol
2. pernicious
3. respite
4. singular