

# IB Theory of Knowledge (TOK) Summer Reading Assignment (2022-2023)

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(Please email me over the summer with any questions or concerns)

Theory of knowledge (TOK) explores questions about knowledge and the process of knowing. TOK emphasizes comparisons and connections between areas of knowledge and encourages students to become more aware of their own perspectives and the perspectives of others.

The following assignment (see TOK Juniors or TOK Seniors as appropriate) is a course requirement and is due the third day of class. After the third day of class, only half credit will be awarded (for up to one week). Seniors must turn in the assignment on August 10. Given that the TOK class for Juniors will meet during the Spring 2023 semester, the assignment for Juniors will be completed no later than January 9, 2023. Juniors may choose to use the summer or fall to begin working on the assignment, but should review the book and the assignment prior to the beginning of the Spring semester if you start early.

## **TOK Seniors**

You will choose one of the “prescribed titles” from the list below and write two pages (500-750 words) in response. Address the topic of your choice exactly as it is—do not modify it. If you use any sources, you must give them credit through proper MLA internal documentation and a works-cited list at the end of the paper.

Please note that the TOK essay engages students in a more formal and sustained piece of writing in response to a title focused on the areas of knowledge. The essay is an external assessment component; it is marked by IB examiners. The final essay must be a maximum of 1,600 words and must be on one of the six prescribed titles issued by the IB for each examination session. Over the summer you will be working with previously assessed topics. **The topics for this year will be released in September 2022 and we will spend the fall semester working on both the TOK essay and student exhibition.**

(Reprinted from Theory of Knowledge: Prescribed Essay Titles for May 2017)

1. “It is only knowledge produced with difficulty that we truly value.” To what extent do you agree with this statement?
2. “Facts are needed to establish theories but theories are needed to make sense of facts.” Discuss this statement with reference to two areas of knowledge.
3. Should key events in the historical development of areas of knowledge always be judged by the standards of their time?
4. “In the production of knowledge, traditions of areas of knowledge offer correctives for ways of knowing.” To what extent do you agree with this statement?
5. Given access to the same facts, how is it possible that there can be disagreement between experts in a discipline? Develop your answer with reference to two areas of knowledge.
6. “Humans are pattern-seeking animals and we are adept at finding patterns whether they exist or not” (adapted from Michael Shermer). Discuss knowledge questions raised by this idea in two areas of knowledge. Be sure to remember your guidelines:

## TOK Senior Rubric for Prescribed Topics

Does the student provide a clear, coherent and critical exploration of the essay title?					
<b>Excellent</b> 9-10	<b>Good</b> 7-8	<b>Satisfactory</b> 5-6	<b>Basic</b> 3-4	<b>Rudimentary</b> 1-2	<b>0</b>
<p>The discussion has a sustained focus on the title and is linked effectively to areas of knowledge. Arguments are clear, coherent and effectively supported by specific examples. The implications of arguments are considered. There is clear awareness and evaluation of different points of view.</p>	<p>The discussion is focused on the title and is linked effectively to areas of knowledge. Arguments are clear, coherent and supported by examples. There is awareness and some evaluation of different points of view.</p>	<p>The discussion is focused on the title and is developed with some links to areas of knowledge. Arguments are offered and are supported by examples. There is some awareness of different points of view.</p>	<p>The discussion is connected to the title and makes superficial or limited links to areas of knowledge. The discussion is largely descriptive. Limited arguments are offered but they are unclear and are not supported by effective examples.</p>	<p>The discussion is weakly connected to the title. While there may be links to the areas of knowledge, any relevant points are descriptive or consist only of unsupported assertions.</p>	<p>The discussion does not reach the standard described by the other levels or is not a response to one of the prescribed titles for the correct examination session.</p>
<b>Possible characteristics</b>					
<p>Insightful Convincing Accomplished Lucid</p>	<p>Pertinent Relevant Analytical Organized</p>	<p>Acceptable Mainstream Adequate Competent</p>	<p>Underdeveloped Basic Superficial Limited</p>	<p>Ineffective Descriptive Incoherent Formless</p>	

## **TOK Juniors**

Students are required to read the book *Outliers: The Story of Success* by Malcolm Gladwell. This book will be instrumental in our discussions about knowledge throughout the year. [The link to the book is here](#). Students must complete a dialectical journal while reading the book. In addition, students will craft a written response (see below). The dialectical journal must be handwritten. A minimum of 30 entries is required. The entries should be spaced out over the book. Both the dialectical journal and written response will be scored out of 100 points but will be converted and worth together half of a 100-point assignment in the gradebook.

### **Part 1**

#### **TOK Junior Dialectical Journal (100 points)**

1. The dialectical journal is like a dialogue or conversation with the text and with yourself. Write down your thoughts, questions, insights, and ideas as you read. Please complete the following:
2. Draw a line down the middle of the paper, or fold the paper in half, making two columns.
3. The left column is used for notes and direct quotations from the reading and should reference the page number. (\*\*Also, please number the entries)
4. The right column is used for commenting on notes or quotations in the left column. The comments should be at least four to five sentences and should include a mixture of the following:
  - ✓ Your thoughts toward the author's words
  - ✓ Words or passages that seem important and why
  - ✓ Connections among passages or sections of the work

Example from *Outliers*—

Quotation/Notes	Response
"And what happens when a player gets chosen for a rep squad? He gets better coaching, and his teammates are better, and he plays fifty or seventy-five games a season instead of twenty games a season like those left behind in the "house" league, and he practices twice as much as, or even three times more than, he would have otherwise. In the beginning, his advantage isn't so much that he is inherently better but only that he is a little older. But by the age of thirteen or fourteen, with the benefit of better coaching and all that extra practice under his belt, he really is better, so he's the one more likely to make it to the Major Junior A league, and from there into the big leagues." (p. 25)	In this excerpt Gladwell challenges widely-accepted understandings of human behavior. He provides an example to support his claim that persons with privilege (including access) are more able to become "outliers" (a term not used here, but a reference to the most successful people. He utilizes the example of a young person who makes a rep squad and thereby derives benefits from gametime, practice, etc. Ultimately, Gladwell places great emphasis on the value of time put in on improving one's craft. With this he seeks to demystify the notion of what makes a person "better" than others. Though his argument that practice is important seems sounds, questions certainly are left unresolved regarding the extent to which his practice (10,000 hours) theory holds up in reality.

## **Dialectical Journal Rubric**

### **Critical Reader (detailed, elaborate responses)**

#### **90-100%:**

- You include the minimum number of entries or more.
- You include responses to text from throughout the book
- Your quotes or notes are relevant, important, thought provoking, and representative of the themes of the text.
- You can “read between the lines” of the text (inference).
- You create new meaning through connections with your own experiences or other texts.
- You carry on a dialogue with the writer. You question, agree, disagree, appreciate, and object.
- Sentences are grammatically correct with correct spelling and punctuation.

### **Connected Reader (detailed responses)**

#### **80-89%:**

- A solid effort is evident.
- You include an adequate number of legible entries.
- Your quotes are relevant and connect to the themes of the text.
- Entries exhibit insight and thoughtful analysis.
- You construct a thoughtful interpretation of the text and quotes are from a range of parts of the book.
- You show some ability to make meaning of what you read.
- You create some new meaning through connections with your own experiences and the text.
- You explain the general significance.
- You raise interesting questions.
- You explain why you agree or disagree with the text.

### **Thoughtful Reader (somewhat detailed responses)**

#### **75-79:**

- You include an insufficient number of entries from throughout the text.
- Sentences are mostly correct with a few careless spelling and grammatical errors.
- You selected quotes that may be interesting to you, but don't really connect to all parts of the text.
- Your response is somewhat interesting but can be confusing.
- You may agree or disagree, but often don't support your views.

### **Literal Reader (simple, factual responses)**

#### **70-74%:**

- You include insufficient entries that do not come from throughout the text.
- Entries exhibit limited insight or none at all.
- You show some, but very few personal connections to the text
- You are sometimes confused by unclear or difficult sections of the text but don't expand on what they may mean.

### **Limited Reader (perfunctory responses)**

#### **Below 70%:**

- You include very few entries.
- Entries don't reflect the entire book.
- Very little effort is evident.
- You do not show from the quotes or responses that you completed the book.
- You find the text confusing, but make no attempt to figure it out.

- You create little or no meaning from the text.
- You make an occasional connection to the text, and the ideas lack development.
- Sentences contain numerous grammatical and spelling errors.

**Part 2**

**TOK Junior *Outliers* Written Response / Reflection (100 points)**

Write a 2-3-page Reflection (500-750 words) on the book, using the rubric posted below.

**Junior Rubric for *Outliers* Report**

Content	<p>65-80 Points (Maximum) –The paper discusses all criteria expressed in the assignment description. The writer clearly focuses their thesis and expresses an opinion on the work in a mature fashion. Details from the work or from research are used as support for the author’s thesis and creative and analytical insights to the work are masterfully articulated.</p> <p>45-64 Points (Mid-Range) -The paper discusses all criteria expressed in the assignment description. The writer has a thesis and expresses an opinion on the work. Details from the work or from research are used as support for the author’s thesis and creative although they may not be as thorough and accurate as a maximum score paper. Portions of support or analysis may be weak or superficial.</p> <p>0-44 Points (Low) -The paper discusses some of the criteria expressed in the assignment description. The writer may lack a clear thesis or not express an opinion on the work in a mature fashion. Details from the work or from research are not used or are used improperly as support for the author’s thesis.</p>
<p><a href="#">MLA Formatting</a> (click for help with MLA)</p>	<p>15-20 Points (Maximum)-The writer uses all conventions of MLA formatting masterfully and follows all assignment formatting requirements.</p> <p>6-14 Points (Mid Range) -The writer uses most of MLA formatting and follows most assignment formatting requirements.</p> <p>0-13 Points (Low) –The writer fails to use MLA formatting conventions or specific assignment requirements.</p>