

Analysis of how the weaker dominates the stronger in "david and goliath"



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In the Elah valley, a massive warrior Goliath was slain by a shepherd David in a battle. Many see the battle to be one of sheer luck and wit, but this fable could uncover a more broad and common perspective. Gladwell argues that the weaker person, or underdog, will not always lose or be at fault. He believes that “ the powerful and strong are not always what they seem” and that power has a limit, citing various events and people who have overcome each of their own obstacles. These various references to past events and people along with the use of common rhetorical strategies make Gladwell’s argument that “ the powerful and strong are not always what they seem” a plausible one.

Gladwell’s most remarkable way of helping to argue his point is through his use of various allusions to events. Whether he references a conflict between the Irish people, the moment cancer becomes cured by a doctor, or the invention of a new anti-criminal law in California; Gladwell always uses them well to strengthen his argument. For example, Gladwell uses the story of a woman that he refers to as “ Caroline Sacks”. She chose to go to a very prestigious university, Brown University, instead of the University of Maryland. The competition that she had in her classes caused her to flunk out. He uses the story to argue that at a less prestigious college, she may have completed her degree, since she would’ve had the same opportunities out of college and she would’ve had less competition in her classes.

(However, the argument is more fully developed through the use of statistics, which will be discussed later.) Another allusion that Gladwell makes is a reference to the success of a Junior High basketball team led by Vivek Ranadivé. A majority of the players have little experience with

basketball, so Ranadivé uses a full court press, where all players cover the field to play defense. This technique used little skill and didn't require tricky, long-distance shots, so the players were successful. The result was that the basketball team beat more skilled competitors and reached the national championships for junior high basketball. Gladwell's skillful use of allusions is strengthened furthermore when he connects this story of Ranadivé with the victory of Arabs under the Lawrence of Arabia, when he beat the skilled Turks using unconventional warfare. These allusions account for a large reason why Gladwell's argument is so successful.

Gladwell's argument is successful because of his use of ethos, logos, and pathos, as well. Gladwell connects to the audience by appealing to the emotions (pathos), as he questions the reader several times. For example, Gladwell asks the question, "You wouldn't wish dyslexia on your child. Or would you?" after thoroughly discussing the problems that a dyslexic suffers through. Another use of pathos would be when Gladwell commands the reader to imagine he or she is a doctor and whether they would slack off more if they had fewer clients compared to working harder if they had more clients. This argument would be used to push the idea that fewer students in a classroom is not always a benefit to the students or teachers. Gladwell strengthens his argument through the use of information from knowledgeable people, referred to as ethos. He uses the knowledge of these people from the very beginning, even being used to explain how David may have been more advantaged in the battle than one may think. He cites that Goliath had a medical condition that professionals coined acromegaly, which made him not only gigantic but also impaired his vision. The point that David

was advantaged in the battle is further explained using the knowledge of Eitan Hirsch, a ballistics expert with the Israeli Defense Forces, who said that a shot from an expert slinger at a distance of thirty-five meters would be enough to penetrate Goliath's skull and to kill him. This leads to an analogy that this simple slingshot is similar to a simple, modern handgun, which is quite the powerful weapon.

Another reference to a knowledgeable person occurs in the discussion about Caroline Sacks. Sacks felt that she had a problem competing with the intelligent students at Brown University, so she dropped out. However, she would've been at the top of the class at a less prestigious college, like the University of Maryland (her second choice). Gladwell references psychologist Herbert Marsh's idea of the "Big Fish-Little Pond theory" to further prove the point that Sacks may have still succeeded if she went to a less prestigious college. Marsh's idea was that the more elite a college or university is, the less proud a student feels about his or her accomplishments. The idea becomes even more powerful when it gets connected to another competition—the contest to get into the Salon in France. Thousands of artists would try every year to get a spot in this Salon, but only a select few would get accepted. A group of impressionist painters who decide to not worry about the Salon and want to become a "big fish in a little pond", leading them to become highly-regarded artists, which includes Renoir and Degas, just to name a few.

The most remarkable technique that Gladwell uses in his book to argue that "the powerful and strong are not always what they seem" is the use of statistics and facts, or logos. The chapter discussing Caroline Sacks uses <https://assignbuster.com/analysis-of-how-the-weaker-dominates-the-stronger-in-david-and-goliath/>

statistics to argue that a person who is top of the class at a less prestigious institution may have the same success in being published after getting a PhD compared to one who is top of the class at a college like Princeton or Harvard. Gladwell compares the average amount of papers published after graduating with the percentile at which they graduated. The data shows that a person who has an easier chance of being top of the class at a less prestigious college will still have a great chance of succeeding after college. The use of statistics is so prevalent that even one chapter is devoted to a graph. The chapter discussed whether a small class size was truly the best, relying fully on a graph. Gladwell dubbed the graph an "inverted U-curve", stating that there is always a maximum value. After the maximum value, the success would begin to decrease, arguing that there is a limit to success. The U-curve is solidified once Gladwell asks teachers about their ideal class size. The teachers state that a size around twenty would be best. Anything higher would add too much work to the teacher's work load and anything lower may allow for limited points of view in a discussion or a small amount of work that may cause the teacher to slack off. The idea of the U-curve continues up until a later chapter, in which Gladwell discusses why the police putting too many people in jail may be a problem. Gladwell finds out from criminologist Todd Clear that "if more than two percent of the neighborhood goes to prison, the effect on crime starts to reverse." This information cemented the idea that there must be a limit to power and that law enforcement, like many other issues, follow an inverted U-curve.

The world presents many with obstacles and challenges. Some challenges are lifelong and unchangeable, such as dyslexia, while others are able to be

circumvented, such as getting into the Salon. The real premise behind David and Goliath is that these traits are commonly misunderstood and that power does have a limit. Gladwell's constant use of allusions, statistics, and references to knowledgeable figures give credibility to his claim and prove that, after all, a giant isn't as giant as he may seem.