



Outliers English Exercises

Chapter 4: The Trouble with Geniuses, Part 2

Part A: Questions for Understanding

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1. Why did Chris Langan wash his clothes naked?

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2. What was Chris's experience growing up?

Page 92

3. Did he get along with the other kids when he was at college? Why?

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4. Why does he think he won't get published?

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5. What is your opinion of why he had such a hard time? There is no right answer, just your opinion.

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6. What was Chris's opinion of Universities such as Harvard?

Page 96-100

7. Oppenheimer and Langan were very similar in many ways. Oppenheimer behaved much worse than Langan. He actually tried to kill his tutor, yet he was very successful in his career. What was the difference between them that caused Oppenheimer to be more successful than Langan?



Page 101-102

In the author's opinion, is practical intelligence innate?

Page 105-108

Why do middle and upper class kids develop more practical intelligence?

Page 112

Why does he talk about the A, B, and C groups?

Page 115

Why did Chris Langan never achieve the success he was capable of?

Part B: Vocabulary

Definitions

Estranged – to be separated

Chris Langan's mother was from San Francisco and was **estranged** from her family.

Pair– two things that go together. E.g. a pair of socks.

We didn't have a **pair** of matched socks.

Sprees – to do a lot of something in a short amount of time

Jack Langan would go on drinking **sprees** and disappear.

Bullwhip- a weapon used to hit slaves and animals to make them work harder.

He used a **bullwhip** to keep the boys in line.

Deadbeat- some who doesn't pay debts and doesn't want to work.

They'd just decided that my family was a bunch of **deadbeats**.



Inquisitive – to want to learn more

They were very **inquisitive**. Asking questions all the time.

Allocate – to assign to a specific thing

...we **allocated** all the scholarship money and it's all gone...

Repugnant – offensive or objectionable

It was sufficiently **repugnant** to me that I wouldn't do it anymore.

Prosper – to do very well

I thought he would **prosper**, I really did.

Frigid – very cold

One **frigid** winter he worked on a clam boat on Long Island.

Sprawling – to stretch across or to cover many different subjects or locations

...he continued to read deeply in philosophy, mathematics, and physics as he worked on a **sprawling** treatise he class the "CTMU" – the "Cognitive Theoretic Model of the Universe."

Credentials – a proof of credibility or evidence of authority

But without academic **credentials**, he despairs of ever getting published in a scholarly journal.

Affiliation – a connection to something

I could use my position, my **affiliation** at Harvard, to promote my ideas.

Wistfully – in a wanting way

"I even noticed that kind of intellectual energy in the year and a half I was in college," he said almost **wistfully**.

Stimulating – something that makes you think

It's such a **stimulating** place to be.

vast – very large

unyielding – resistant to pressure, not flexible

Langan talks about dealing with Reed and Montanta State as if they were some kind of **vast** and **unyielding** government bureaucracy.



Rigid – not flexible

...small liberal arts colleges like Reed, tend not to be **rigid** bureaucracies.

Unstable – going from one extreme to another

He grew more and more emotionally **unstable**...

Protracted – taking a very long time

Probation – a period of time where if you do anything wrong there will be strong consequences

After **protracted** negotiations, it was agreed that Robert would be put on **probation**...

Imperil – to put in danger

...each of whom runs into a problem that **imperils** his college career.

Exaggeration – to make it sound better than it really is

...the man who was trying out for what might be said to be – without **exaggeration** – one of the most important jobs of the twentieth century.

Smitten – in love

It was an irresistible performance. Groves was **smitten**.

Grasp – understand

Oppenheimer was the first scientist Groves had met on his tour who **grasped** that building an atomic bomb required finding practical solutions to a variety of cross-disciplinary problems.

Savvy – intelligence

It's because he possessed the kind of **savvy** that allowed him to get what he wanted from the world.

Dry – boring

Trivial – not important

I happened to get a guy who taught in a very **dry**, very **trivial** way.

Lax – permitting

...there would be the strict parents and the **lax** parents...



Shuttle – to drive someone from one place to another

The wealthier parents were heavily involved in their children's free time, **shuttling** them from one activity to the next...

Regret – to feel bad about an action

Cultivate – to encourage and help

Similarly Mrs. Brindle does not discuss Katie's interest in drama or express **regret** that she cannot afford to **cultivate** her daughter's talent.

Intervene – to get between or mediate between two people

They **intervened** on behalf of their kids.

Petition- to make a formal request

Her mother arranges for her to be retested privately, **petitions** the school, and gets her daughter admitted.

Intimidate

The poor parents, by contrast, are **intimidated** by authority.

Gregarious -sociable

Outgoing - friendly

The **gregarious** and **outgoing** nature she displays at home is hidden in this setting.

Whiny – a description for someone who complains a lot

(They are) - better behaved, less **whiny**, more creative in making use of their own time...

Concerted-performed together

Cultivation – the noun form of cultivate

But in practical terms, **concerted cultivation** has enormous advantages.

To cope – to handle something

She learns teamwork and how to **cope** in highly structured settings.

Assert- to say with confidence

...it's perfectly all right for him to **assert** himself.



Designated- the marked time

On the **designated** evening, Robert showed up at the club with his parents, who proudly introduced their son as J. Robert Oppenheimer.

Startled – to be surprised

The **startled** audience of geologists and amateur rock collectors burst out laughing...

Shy- not very comfortable by social situations

Awkward- not smooth

Nevertheless- in spite of, even though

Shy and **awkward**, Robert **nevertheless** read his prepared remarks and was given a hearty round of applause.

Intimidate – to make afraid

Array – to place in a specific order

..you aren't going to be **intimidated** by a row of Cambridge dons **arrayed** in judgment...

Overwhelmingly- by a very large majority, by a lot

The As **overwhelmingly** came from the middle and the upper class.

Deny- to say no

Simply- only, just

You're **simply** seeing the difference between those schooled by their families to present their best face to the world, and those **denied** the experience.

Boastful – to speak with lots of pride

Defensive – to be in a defending position (adjective)

What he said sounded **boastful**, but it wasn't really. It was the opposite - a touch **defensive**.



Fill in the blank with the correct vocabulary word

Gregarious Outgoing Awkward Shy Nevertheless Cultivate Concerted
Intimidate Affiliation

The boy was _____ and _____ because he was _____ by other kids.
_____, he joined a sports team and through his _____ with sports, he began to
become more confident. He made a _____ effort to _____ this new confidence and
became a confident, _____ and _____ adult.

Dry Exaggeration Protracted

How was the movie?

It was horrible! It's no _____ to say it was possibly the most _____ and
_____ movie I've ever seen.

Deadbeat Bullwhip Probation Overwhelmingly Startled Imperil
Estranged

The policeman was placed on _____ after he hit a _____ with a _____. This
_____ inappropriate action _____ the population. The policeman _____ the
reputation of the whole department and was therefore _____ from it after the event.



Rigid To cope Simply Denied Whiny Unyielding
Grasp Pair Defensive Assert

The _____ children _____ could not _____ when they were _____ what they wanted by the _____ teacher. When the teacher _____ that they would follow the new rules the _____ of children were very _____, but they quickly _____ that the teacher was _____ and they would win.

Spree Unstable Stimulating Boastful Wistfully Regret
Prosper Designate Intervene Shuttle

The _____ man was very proud, but he was _____. Nobody knew what he would do next. One minute he had a _____ conversation with a group of friends and the next he was going on a drinking _____. When started to drink he was full of _____. He would _____ talk about his failure to _____ and blame everyone else. He would often start to lose control and a friend would have to _____ and _____ him back home. It was so bad that his friends would _____ someone at the beginning of the night to do this job.



Inquisitive Allocate Frigid Sprawling Credentials Repugnant Smitten
Trivial Lax Vast Array Petition Savvy

There was a _____ of homes spread out across the valley. The _____ scientist went out into the _____ air to view the effect of pollution on the town from the hillside. As he looked down on the town he thought it was _____. A _____ cloud of pollution surrounded the town. He was going to conduct a study and use his _____ as a scientist to _____ the city to pass stronger laws that would tighten the _____ rules regarding how much a car could pollute. He knew people would not be happy about his findings. He was _____ enough to know that the city would _____ part of the cost to each resident and raise taxes. This would not be a _____ increase. The town had been _____ with the idea of SUVs and nearly everyone would need to have a cleaner vehicle.

Part C: Phrasal Verbs, Idioms, and Useful Phrases

Get to – to be able to obtain or reach something.

“He would lock the kitchen cabinets so the boys couldn’t **get to** the food.” Pg92

Keep in line – to keep someone behaving, often by force.

“He used a bullwhip to **keep** the boys **in line**.” Pg92

Sure as hell – Definitely, surely (this is more aggressive)

Play up – To make a big deal about something.

“He **sure has hell** didn’t **play it up**” Pg92



A bunch of - several

They'd just decided that my family was **a bunch of** deadbeats. Pg92

To stick up for – to defend

To **stick up for** himself and his brothers, Chris started to lift weights. Pg92

Knock out – to make someone unconscious

“Jack Langan got rough with the boys...and Chris **knocked** him **out** cold” Pg92

Drop out – to quit a program

“So I **dropped out** of college, simple as that” Pg94

To make sense – to be rational

“It **made** absolutely no **sense** to me when he left that.” Pg95

_____ **(to be) in the air** – all over the place; very common

“**Ideas are in the air** constantly.” Pg96

Profit incentive – the objective of making profit

“Harvard is basically a glorified corporation, operating with a **profit incentive**.” Pg96

To come down to – the most important thing; the thing that is the deciding factor

The man – the government

...it is going to **come down to** what you want to do and what you feel is right verses what **the man** says you can do to receive another paycheck. Pg96

Out to – with the objective of

Step out of line – do something wrong

They are **out to** make sure you don't **step out of line**. Pg96

Deal with – having interactions with

Some kind of – a type of

Langan talks about **dealing with** Read and Montana State as if they were **some kind of** vast and unyielding government bureaucracy. Pg96



Come to grips with – to understand

...we could begin to **come to grips with** chemical, metallurgical, engineering, and ordnance problems that had so far received no consideration.” Pg100

Zeroing in – to focus on

She picked both blacks and whites and children from both wealthy homes and poor homes, **zeroing in** ultimately on twelve families. Pg102

Sign up – to enroll

But she **signed up** for it herself and walked to choir practice on her own. Pg103

Speak up – to state your opinion and be heard

“Alex’s mother,” Lareau writes, “is teaching that he has the right to **speak up**... Pg106

Balance of power – the amount of power a person or group has

In so doing, he successfully shifts the **balance of power** away from the adults and toward himself. Pg107

Right down to – even; showing the extent of something

..showing him the rules of the game, **right down to** that little rehearsal in the car... Pg108

Has yet to – has not done yet

Here he was, a man with a one-in-a-million mind, and he **had yet to** have any impact on the world. Pg114

Make his way – to succeed in a journey

Make it- to succeed

He’d had to **make his way** alone, and no one – not rock stars, not professional athletes, not software billionaires, and not even geniuses – ever **make it** alone. Pg115



Fill in the blank with the correct Phrasal Verb or Idiom
(remember to put it in the correct form).

Businesses can't operate without a_____.

Did he _____ into graduate school?

Did you _____ for classes yet.

Don't _____ of school. You need to finish.

Don't worry, he'll _____ in the world.

He has been trying for a while, but he _____ make any difference.

He _____ won't be working here after what he said.

I couldn't _____ class today because of the traffic.

I don't really believe them. I think they're _____ liars

It just doesn't _____. Why did he do that?

It's hard to _____ a difficult situation.

It's spring, and love is_____.

Mike Tyson _____ him_____.

The _____ is moving away the rich countries and towards the emerging countries.

_____ is _____ control what you do. The government is always watching.

The salesman really _____ his role in closing the deal.

The sergeant _____ the soldiers _____ by yelling at them constantly.



The thief took everything, _____ my favorite jacket.

There must be _____ mistake. I don't know you.

We need to _____ on the problem so we can solve it.

What it _____ is what you want to do with your life.

You are very quite, you need to _____ more in class.

You better not _____. You're already on probation.

You need to _____ the situation or you won't be able to deal with it.

You shouldn't let him bully you. You need to _____ yourself.

Part D: Prefix / Suffix exercises (fill in the blank with the correct preposition)

-ance (x2)	In-	Un-	Re-	-istic	-ize	-sive
New		_____			(new again)	
Govern		_____			(noun)	
Renew		_____			(noun)	
Construct		_____			(noun)	
Appreciation		_____			(verb)	
Eventual		_____			(adverb)	
Affiliate		_____			(noun)	
Edit		_____			(the job)	



Glorify	_____	(adjective)
yielding	_____	(opposite)
particular	_____	(adverb)
stable	_____	(opposite)
believe	_____	(opposite + adjective)
resist	_____	(opposite + adjective)

Part F: Collocation exercises (Which one can't you do?)

Spend time	get rough	make money	make sure	lose a scholarship
Save time	stay rough	spend money	have sure	win a scholarship
Pass the time	be rough	pass the money	be sure	receive a scholarship
Get time		get money		make a scholarship