

No one can make you feel inferior
without your consent.

-Eleanor Roosevelt



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David and Goliath: A Question



Recently, I read Malcolm Gladwell's *David and Goliath*. For those unfamiliar with Gladwell, he is a New York Times bestselling author of *Outliers*, *Blink*, and *Tipping Point*. Gladwell is also a journalist for *The New Yorker*, as well is best known for exploring the psychology of "Ten Thousand Hours" and the "Myth of Talent."

Gladwell argues the importance of the Hebrew myth of *David and Goliath* is that it is applicable to so many modern situations. He continues, of interest that a shepherd boy used a sling and a stone, rather than mimic Goliath's military strategy, to overcome and defeat him. In a world of insecure individuals, conflicts, and power he states, this is a myth worth re-visiting. "David and Goliath is about skill, not power, more about one's intelligence than who can summon armies," says Gladwell.

Goliath, a symbol of power and David, a symbol of weakness. Goliath, with his weapons of war and arrogance. David, with a sling and a stone, refusing the sword and armor offered from King Saul, saying something interesting, "I cannot even walk in these, I am not used to them." I encourage anyone to read Gladwell's work. I want to take a moment and further some of his exegesis. I found the same hope in David's statement and Gladwell's interpretation.

What Gladwell found interesting in the myth is simply that David fought in his own way, no matter if those around laughed him to scorn. Almost everywhere we turn in life we find insecure individuals, complex situations, conflict, and in context, we find that power intimidates and comes in myriad forms. What David teaches us is to trust our instinct, our own magic, our own skill. The important question that David asks us without asking is, "What is your sling and stone, how have you learned?" The philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche stated it well when he wrote, "You have your way, I have my way. As for the supposed correct way, that never existed, you just thought it did."

Never in history is ordinary praised. Power is abhorred by all, yet oddly accepted. Any historical hero overcame power through weakness. The ability to overcome obstacles isn't about what Goliath did know, its about the one thing he misperceived, underestimating his enemy, blinded by his understanding. What is your sling and stone? Learn it, rather than be concerned with Goliath.

Patron: Oliver

“Patron” is a column in *Athenaeum* that focuses on someone connected to FCPL. This month I interviewed Oliver the Therapy Dog. He is an Australian Labradoodle, from Sydney, who even speaks with an Australian accent! He finished his degree in therapy work in 2012 from the Delta Society in Bloomington, IN. He’s since finished a Master’s in Divinity: his thesis “What is a Friend?” He will be visiting FCPL this summer as part of our reading program. Oliver is pictured to the right.

Hello, Oliver. Pleasure to meet you. How long have you been attending the FCPL?

Good question. Time questions are always difficult for me to answer. I remember it was sometime, or maybe it was someone. There was a guy who was having a tough day, I remember that. I was called in to do some therapy work. I do also remember a little girl who was having trouble reading. I was able to help her get over her nerves and even read aloud to some of our other friends.

Do you have any favorite movies or books that you would like to recommend to our readers?

I was hoping I would get this question. I read your newsletter every month. It is so funny. I love reading and watching movies. First, I am a big fan of the *Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew Series*. I also like early *Sherlock Holmes*. There are so many movies, but I will just tell you my three favs. *Hachi: A Dog’s Tale* has paws down been the greatest influence on career. *My Dog Skip* I have a lot of respect for. I contemplated this movie when I working on my Master’s of Divinity. I am also nearly obsessed with Robert Downey Jr. in *Sherlock Holmes* movies.

What is it that drew you to work in the field of therapy, as opposed to search and rescue, or police detective work?

You always ask such poignant questions. I do like *Sherlock Holmes*, but I just never felt a predestination there. I have always been a feeler and I just know when someone needs me to comfort them. You can only have so much magic. I think we all have our magical powers and its best to stay within the confines of who you are. In the end, I am a friend.



I have seen so much written on therapy dog work recently. There seems to be so many different projects.

I guess you’re right. I don’t pay much attention to anything other than where I am, but I do have other friends who are spearheading projects across the country. Samantha the Newfoundland spent this past year working in hospitals. I also have many friends who work closely with elementary schools all the way up to visiting colleges during finals week to help everyone de-stress. I chose library work specifically because it seemed the most eclectic. Each person is unique and has a story. I guess I found the analogy intriguing.

What exactly is Project Friend?

Project Friend is simply a therapy dog project that I have called “friend.” Last year, during the summer reading program, I worked closely with two other friends: Samantha the Newfoundland, and Nakita the Siberian Husky. There isn’t really a strict schedule during our visits. Its more about presence really. Listening to the needs of the patrons. We often visit each department, starting at the Children’s Dept. for a story or two. I personally like IT, specifically Zak the IT guy. Though there is a guy in literacy who is a bit odd.

So what is your schedule for the summer reading program?

I will be at the Rochester Branch on Fridays: June 16th, June 30th, and July 7th at 12:30 pm. I will be at the Fulton Branch on Wednesday, June 12th, July 10th, and Tuesday, August 8th at 10:00 am. I will be at the Aubbee Branch Wednesday: June 14th and July 12th at noon. I am looking forward to making some new friends.