

**Sample CATW prompt - based on "Genius: The Modern View" by [DAVID BROOKS](#)**

Some people live in romantic ages. They tend to believe that genius is the product of a divine spark. They believe that there have been, throughout the ages, certain paragons of greatness — Dante, Mozart, Einstein — whose talents far exceeded normal comprehension, and who are best approached with reverential awe.

We, of course, live in a scientific age, and modern research pierces hocus-pocus. In the view that is now dominant, even Mozart's early abilities were not the product of some innate spiritual gift. His early compositions were nothing special. They were pastiches of other people's work. Mozart was a good musician at an early age, but he would not stand out among today's top child-performers. What Mozart had, we now believe, was the same thing Tiger Woods had — the ability to focus for long periods of time and a father intent on improving his skills. Mozart played a lot of piano at a very young age, so he got his 10,000 hours of practice in early and then he built from there.

The latest research suggests a more prosaic, democratic, even puritanical view of the world. The key factor separating geniuses from the merely accomplished is not a divine spark. It's not I.Q., a generally bad predictor of success... Instead, it's deliberate practice. Top performers spend more hours (many more hours) rigorously practicing their craft... By practicing slowly, by breaking skills down into tiny parts and repeating, the strenuous student forces the brain to internalize a better pattern of performance. ..The primary trait is not some mysterious genius. It's the ability to develop a deliberate, strenuous and boring practice routine.

Research takes some of the magic out of great achievement. But it underlines a fact that is often neglected. Public discussion is smitten by genetics and what we're "hard-wired" to do. And it's true that genes place a leash on our capacities. But the brain is also phenomenally plastic. We construct ourselves through behavior. As one writer observes, it's not who you are, it's what you do.

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**Read the passage** above and write an essay responding to the ideas it presents. In your essay, be sure to summarize the passage in your own words, stating the author's most important ideas. Develop your essay by identifying one idea in the passage that you feel is especially significant, and explain its significance. Support your claims with evidence or examples drawn from what you have read, learned in school, and/or personally experienced.

Remember to review your essay and make any changes or corrections that are needed to help your reader follow your thinking.

**Plan before you write:**

The author's name is \_\_\_\_\_

What is the title of piece and what does it mean? \_\_\_\_\_

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What is the author's main idea /thesis? \_\_\_\_\_

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What are some points that the author uses to support the main idea? \_\_\_\_\_

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What did the author say that interests you most? \_\_\_\_\_

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What did you find important in the article? Explain. \_\_\_\_\_

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