Writing an Outline

A. Bare-Bones Outline (from Romeo and Juliet paper by Alan Reinstein)

I. Intro
   a. Personal account of watching FL on the film
   b. Thesis
      i. Shakespeare uses Friar Lawrence’s opening scene in order to announce the balance in nature and humanity of good and evil and in doing so sets the friar up as the chief model for such balance.
   c. Map of the essay

II. Body
   a. FL’s introductory speech
      i. Balance right off the bat
      ii. The meaning of the final six lines
   b. His failures
      i. in the story—what vices, crimes is he responsible for
         1. Performs the marriage
         2. He hatches a plan to have Juliet pretend to be dead for forty-two hours
         3. He leaves Juliet in a fragile state, afraid that he might get caught
      ii. In character
         1. fear and weakness
   c. His advice to others comes back to himself
      i. Stumbling
      ii. Wits
   d. His success—how his vice has been “by action dignified
   e. Forgiveness for FL—what is Shakespeare saying
      i. He is a “holy” man
      ii. the friar’s confession: here I stand both to impeach and purge—to confess and to cleanse himself

III. Conclusion
B. More Fully-Developed Outline

I. Intro
   a. Personal account of watching FL on the film (“I dare no longer stay)—all his weakness against his visible role of moral and adult authority
   b. Thesis
      i. Shakespeare uses Friar Lawrence’s opening scene to announce the balance in nature and humanity of good and evil and in doing so sets the friar up as the chief model for such balance. He is an agent both of harm and healing, for much of the play unwittingly stumbling in his effort to do good and then, at then end, ironically succeeding in spite of his flaws. Throughout the play, the friar continues to remind the reader of nature’s balance in humans by offering up words of wisdom and advice to which, it becomes clear, the friar neglects to pay attention himself. Finally, his exoneration at the end of the play by the Prince gives the reader a chance to guess at Shakespeare’s meaning of the importance of holiness and having good intentions.

   c. Map of the essay

II. Body
   a. THEME--FL’s introductory speech
      i. Balance right off the bat
      ii. The meaning of the final six lines
         1. the same thing is said twice, in different directions
   b. PLOT—the speech foreshadows the plot
      i. From his good intentions come bad results; from these bad results come a great good
         1. in the story—what vices, crimes is he responsible for
            a. Performs the marriage
               i. He hastily marries the two, even when he is suspicious of Romeo’s love for Juliet—**not knowing that this will be a healthy marriage** between to people who love each other deeply.
               ii. He marries them in secret
               iii. He **exploits the two lovers** to bring the feuding families together—unethical to use people so. Friar L will get the credit if the plan works
            b. He hatches a plan to have Juliet pretend to be dead for forty-two hours instead of exposing the situation to the authorities in order to avoid having to marry Juliet to Paris and get in trouble, so afraid he is to get to have to confess.
            i. This plan endangers Juliet since such a concoction must be dangerous
         ii. He leaves Juliet in a fragile state, afraid that he might get caught: “I dare no longer stay.”
         iii. The lovers deaths bring about the end of the feud

   c. CHARACTER/HUMAN NATURE--His advice to others comes back to himself; the theme of balance of good and evil is represented in his character
      i. fear and weakness
         1. thy noble shape is but a form or wax/digressing from the valor of a man
         2. the noise scared me
         3. trembles, sighs, and weeps
      ii. Stumbling
         1. Stumbling on abuse
         2. Wisely and slow, they stumble that run fast
            a. Too swift arrives as tardy as too slow
         3. How oft tonight have my old feet stumbled at graves
      iii. Wits
         1. Romeo: Wise men have no eyes
            a. O then I see madmen have no ears (like O then I see Queen Mab…)
         2. to Juliet: It strains me past the compass of my wits

III. Conclusion
   a. Forgiveness for FL—what is Shakespeare saying
      i. He is a “holy” man
         1. Juliet recognizes him as such: he hath been tried a holy man
         2. the Prince: We still have known thee for a holy man
      ii. the friar’s confession: here I stand both to impeach and purge—to confess and to cleanse himself