Literary Analysis Paper Outline

I. Introduction
   A. Context: Setup the context of the novel. This includes stating the author, the title of the work, and perhaps some details as to the time period the piece was written in, or anything else you think would be relevant for your reader to know before reading your analysis. This is where you might also include a very short summary of the text you are analyzing (by short, I mean no more than a sentence or two).
   B. Thesis:
      1. Claim: Your claim will be your stance as to the meaning (or a meaning) behind the novel (or aspects of the novel).
         Ex. While survival is still a major topic throughout the story, “The Open Boat” can also be read as a striving for community, . . .
      2. Reasons: These will be your reasons that you have that prove your claim. Here is where you might delve into the use of literary devices in the text.
         Ex. . . . as the survivors find a sort of friendship with one another, and as they struggle together to live.

II. Section I - Reason #1
   A. Topic Sentence: This sentence will state the first reason that you have supporting your claim in your thesis. Phrase this sentence in a way that restates the reason you had in your thesis, and explain how it is relevant to your claim.
      Ex. Multiple points throughout the story highlight the moments of the passengers finding a type of friendship with each other.
   B. Introduce the Evidence: Either briefly state the context of the quote you are about to give, or give a little glimpse into the function of the quote within the story.
Ex. The narrator of the text specifically highlights the brotherhood that the survivors have formed:

C. Quote: Give the quote, along with the citation.
Ex. “It would be difficult to describe the subtle brotherhood of men that was here established on the seas. No one said that it was so. No one mentioned it. But it dwelt in the boat, and each man felt it warm him” (Crane 370).

D. Explication (un-packaging the quote): Explicating the quote involves picking out the specific words and language used by the author within the quote. Essentially, you are saying what the quote means.
Ex. This brotherhood is described as “subtle,” and the text goes on to explain that no one has verbally discussed this reality, which hints that it may not even consciously recognized by each of the men. However, even though it is not fully recognize, it is tangibly felt by each of the men, as each “felt it warm him.”

E. Analysis (consider the larger significance of your explication): After detailing what the quote means, you need to take another step outwards. What does this use of language mean? Why is this quote important? What conclusions can we draw from this evidence?
Ex. As the narrator himself is commenting on the apparent brotherhood between the survivors, the conclusion is that this is no mere illusion of a single passenger . . .

F. Tie-Back to Thesis: How does this evidence support your thesis? Be sure to give a tie-back that shows how this example that you’ve analyzed proves your thesis.
Ex. . . . but rather a reality of the community that is drawing the four men together.

III. Section II - Reason #2 (Note: You can have as many sections as you like; two is probably a good minimum, and the maximum would depend on the paper
length requirements set by your instructor. Also, if you have more than one quote/piece of evidence, you can have more than one paragraph per reason.)

A. **Topic Sentence**
B. **Quote**
C. **Explication**
D. **Analysis**
E. **Tie-Back to Thesis**

**IV. Conclusion**

A. **Restate Thesis:** Restate your thesis again in the conclusion. Be sure to change the wording so it is not repetitive, and so that it is more conducive to a conclusion, rather than an introduction.

Ex. *Apart from the obviously seen theme of survival in the face of an indifferent world, the striving of the four survivors for community in Crane’s “The Open Boat” is decidedly a major theme.*

B. **Larger Significance of Thesis:** Take a step further outwards from your initial claim. What is the larger significance of what you’ve just argued, beyond the contents of the story?

Ex. *While this particular story of Crane’s is usually categorized as a Naturalist piece, the search for community demonstrates a very Modernistic theme.*

C. **Wrap-up Statement/CALL for Further Inquiry:** Either provide a satisfying concluding statement to end your paper, or perhaps spark more interest in your reader by leaving them with a thought that they can pursue further.

Ex. *Perhaps rather than lumping this piece in with Naturalism, it would be better placed as a bleed from Naturalism to Modernism.*