Organizing Information: The Outline

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class Period: ___

      An outline is a helpful organizational tool. An outline can be used to organize information for studying purposes, or to organize information for writing.

      For this exercise, select a person to research. Find information related to the person's life–birth and childhood, education, and accomplishments. Place the information you discover under the appropriate headings. Once you have completed the outline, each main heading will serve as the basis for a paragraph. The subheadings beneath each heading will serve as the content of the paragraph. Before you know it, you will enough material to write a brief essay on the person you have chosen.

I.   Introduction
    A.   _____
    B.   _____
    C.   _____
II.   Birth and childhood
    A.   _____
    B.   _____
    C.   _____
III.   Education
    A.   _____
    B.   _____
    C.   _____
IV.   Accomplishments
    A.   _____
    B.   _____
    C.   _____
V.   Conclusion
    A.   _____
    B.   _____
    C.   _____

      Do you find yourself running out of space, or perhaps with another paragraph topic? Feel free to create your own outline on the back of this sheet.

      Hint: Most word-processing programs (the programs you use for typing and writing papers on a computer) have an outlining tool which you can use to automatically create your own outline. If you do not have access to a computer, graph paper can prove useful when writing an outline because the vertical lines help track the placements of headings and subheadings.