Sample Sentence Outline for Literary Analysis + Research Essay

Instructions: A sentence outline identifies the main and supporting arguments, presenting them in full sentences. Below each supporting argument is a space for your notes about what evidence from the texts you will use, including material from the outside source(s). Provide enough notes so you know and can find what you are looking for: the general examples (characters and other textual elements) and where exactly it comes from (in what text and where in that text).

Topic: human nature
The Texts: Shirley Jackson’s “The Lottery” and W. H. Auden’s “Musée des Beaux Arts”
The Literary Criticism: Psychological Criticism
The Prompt: What is revealed about human nature through the focus in both texts on human suffering?

Sources:
1. About one of the texts (about Shirley Jackson’s story “The Lottery”)

2. About the context:

3. About the literary criticism
The Outline

a. **The Claim** (main argument): Both “The Lottery” and “Musée des Beaux Arts” argue that the human ability to disregard human suffering makes us essentially barbaric.

A. **Reason #1**: Both texts show us randomly selected human victims seen at a distance.
   i. Evidence: “The Lottery”
      a. The lottery process/story structure focused on the town as a whole (first few paragraphs)
      b. Tessie Hutchinson’s flat characterization, her late arrival, joking (page 3)
      c. Her physical & emotional distance from her family
   ii. Evidence: “Musée des Beaux Arts”
      a. The context of paintings, then one painting (stanza 1)
      b. Icarus (stanza 2)
      c. Just as a name, a “splash” a “cry”

B. **Reason #2**: Both texts also present us with uncaring onlookers.
   i. Evidence:

C. **Reason #3**: It is also clear that in both texts the reader is supposed to identify with the onlooker rather than the victim.
   i. Evidence:

D. **Reason #4**: In “The Lottery,” the spectators are ultimately participants inflicting the suffering on the victim.
   i. Evidence:
      a. Griffin, Amy A. "Jackson's The Lottery."

E. **Reason #5**: “Musée des Beaux Arts” is not without its representatives of human brutality.
   i. Evidence:

F. **Reason #6**: Both texts, however, implicate the everyday human, not the extreme version.
   i. Evidence:

G. **Reason #7**: Cruelty is presented as a ritualized norm.
   i. Evidence:
      a. Coulthard, A.R. "Jackson's THE LOTTERY."

**OTHER IDEAS:**
Human selfishness (the id) as prevalent—survival
Insufficiency of the superego?
Is the focus/blame on the individual or society?
Choice not to “see.”