All About Outliners

Make a list — of things to do, of places to go on your vacation, of your employees and their addresses.

Keep track — of your expenditures, of books you've loaned to friends, of what plants are in your garden.

Take notes — while listening to a lecture, while reading a book, while researching your doctoral dissertation.

Store information — about ways to improve your office, about the gods and heroes of Ancient Greece, about how the Perl programming language works.

Make plans — for a talk you have to give, for an article you want to write, for an entire book.

These are some of the innumerable uses to which outlines and outliners can be put. In fact, they are among the innumerable uses to which outlines and outliners actually *have* been put, by the author of this document!

Outlines are wonderful things. They are easy, yet powerful. They are incredibly flexible, usable in endless ways. And they're fun.

The Opal application is an outliner, and the documents it works with are outlines. If you're unfamiliar with this kind of application or document, read on and all will be explained. First we'll talk about what an *outline* is; then we'll talk about what an *outliner* is; and finally we'll talk about why outlines and outliners are a good thing, and how you might want to use them. By the end of the discussion, you'll be familiar with all the basic concepts of outlines, and you'll probably be starting to think of some useful and interesting ways to use Opal to create and maintain outlines in your own life.

What Is an Outline?

An *outline* is an arrangement of snippets of text into an ordered hierarchy. That's an accurate definition, but it's rather dry and opaque, so let's take it apart and see what it really means.

When I say a *snippet of text*, I'm just waving my hands; it doesn't really matter what a snippet of text is, and it could be anything. A snippet could be any length: it might be a single word or a telegraphic phrase, or it might be a complete sentence, a complete paragraph, or even several paragraphs. It might include various non-textual elements, such as pictures. None of that really matters, so let's just take a snippet to be "some text." Also, Opal calls a snippet a *topic*, so from now on we'll use that terminology.

With that out of the way, we can proceed to the really interesting part, which is the hierarchy into which these topics are arranged.

A *hierarchy* is a structure where there are a number of things, each of which "belongs" to exactly one of the other things. The notion of "belonging" is purely metaphorical, and you can think of it however you like. If Thing B "belongs" to Thing A, you can imagine Thing A's relationship to Thing B metaphorically as one of mastery, or ownership, or containment. Actually, Opal treats the metaphor as one of parentage: Thing A is thought of as Thing B's mother, and thing B is thought of as thing A's daughter. That's a helpful metaphor, because it captures the "exactly one" part of the definition of a hierarchy: in

real life, a mother might have many daughters, but a daughter has exactly one mother. Just remember, though, that this is only a metaphor!

So, here's a little tiny outline, consisting of just two topics:

▼ **Cartoon characters**
    ▷ **Mickey Mouse**

In the outline, the hierarchy is physically expressed by indentation. The topic "Mickey Mouse" is below "Cartoon characters," but it is also indented so that it starts to the right of where "Cartoon characters" starts. This shows the relationship between them: the "Mickey Mouse" topic belongs to the "Cartoon characters" topic, and conversely, "Cartoon characters" is the owner or container (or, in Opal terms, the mother) of the "Mickey Mouse" topic.

That wasn't a very interesting outline; it was too small to illustrate outlines effectively. So let's extend the contents of the outline:

▼ **Cartoon characters**
    ▷ **Mickey Mouse**
    ▷ **Donald Duck**
    ▷ **Bugs Bunny**
    ▷ **Elmer Fudd**

Now we start to see one reason why it might make sense to make an outline in the first place — why a hierarchy might be a useful way to arrange topics of text. It looks like we're trying to make a list of cartoon characters. "Cartoon characters" is a *general category*; Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, and the rest are all examples of *particular* cartoon characters. Each of them *is* a cartoon character, so it makes sense that each of them "belongs to" or "falls under" the more general category "Cartoon characters."

In forming this list, however, we might have reason to object that we're lumping apples with oranges: Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck are Disney cartoon characters, whereas Bugs Bunny and Elmer Fudd are Warner cartoon characters. If this matters to us, we can introduce another level of hierarchy to express it:

- ▾ Cartoon characters
  - ▾ Disney
    - ▷ Mickey Mouse
    - ▷ Donald Duck
  - ▾ Warner
    - ▷ Bugs Bunny
    - ▷ Elmer Fudd

Our outline is still small, but it illustrates the general structure of an outline, and it's large enough to generalize from. An outline has, as it were, two dimensions; and we can see this even from our little outline, especially if we imagine extending it still further. One dimension is a dimension of *length*. Outlines have a length dimension because many topics can "belong to" the same topic. For example, think about the "Disney" topic. Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck are not the only Disney cartoon characters, so we might want to add more. This would extend the outline in the length dimension:

- ▾ Cartoon characters
  - ▾ Disney
    - ▷ Mickey Mouse
    - ▷ Donald Duck
    - ▷ Pluto
    - ▷ Goofy
  - ▾ Warner
    - ▷ Bugs Bunny
    - ▷ Elmer Fudd

Such an extension of the outline's length can go on as far as we like. As long as we can think of more Disney characters, and as long as we care to add them to the list under "Disney," we are free to do so.

At the same time, the hierarchy, as we can see, gives the outline a dimension of *depth*: "Donald Duck" belongs to "Disney," and "Disney" belongs to "Cartoon characters", so "Donald Duck" is two levels deeper than "Cartoon characters." This dimension of depth, too, can be extended as far as we like, to whatever degree may make sense for the purposes of a particular outline: Thing A can "contain" Thing B which can "contain" Thing C which can "contain" Thing D, and so on and so on, as far as necessary. For example, we might add Huey, Dewey, and Louie to the outline, but we might feel that they naturally "belong to" Donald Duck, so we might place them in a new level of depth:

- ▼ **Cartoon characters**
  - ▼ **Disney**
    - ▷ **Mickey Mouse**
    - ▼ **Donald Duck**
      - ▷ **Huey**
      - ▷ **Dewey**
      - ▷ **Louie**
    - ▷ **Pluto**
    - ▷ **Goofy**
  - ▼ **Warner**
    - ▷ **Bugs Bunny**
    - ▷ **Elmer Fudd**

(Whether that is the "right way" to form this particular outline is a meaningless problem. It's your outline! You are free to form it in whatever way you like. You can arrange — and rearrange — an outline in whatever way works for you;

and indeed, that is part of the art, the fun, and the usefulness of outlines. But let's not worry about that now; at the moment, we're just talking about what an outline *is*, not what it's *for*.)

There is one more aspect of an outline that appeared in our definition but that does not seem to play much of a role in this particular outline: the hierarchy, as we stated in our definition, is *ordered*. In our outline, Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck and Pluto all "belong to" Disney, but in relationship to one another, they also have a particular order: Mickey Mouse comes before Donald Duck, who comes before Pluto. This might not matter much in the case of cartoon characters, but it could certainly matter if our outline contained, say, a sequence of instructions:

▼ How to get dressed
  ▷ Put on trousers
  ▷ Put on socks
  ▷ Put on shoes

The relative ordering of the trousers and socks may not be mission-critical, but there is certainly a reason why the shoes appear in last position: putting on your shoes early in the process would make it very difficult to put on your trousers, and would it make it downright impossible to put on your socks (properly).

So much for what an outline is. That's really all there is to it. At this point, you may be saying: "That's *all?* But that's so simple!" You're right; outlines *are* simple. That's one of the reasons they're so wonderful. But they are also powerful, and the power starts to appear when you see what you can *do* with an outline, using a specially designed computer application, an outliner — such as Opal. So read on!

WHAT IS AN OUTLINER?

A n *outliner* is a computer application for constructing, using, and rearranging an outline. And this is where things start to get really interesting. After all, you could create an outline just using a pencil and paper — indeed, you've probably done so. (For example, most of us have made out a shopping list of things to buy at various stores; one way or another, that's really a kind of outline.) But on a computer, you get to view and navigate your outline in powerful ways. Thanks to the computer, no matter how large and complicated your outline becomes, it remains tractable and easy to work with. Even more important, with an outliner, you get to edit and rearrange your outline. An outline on paper is fixed and frozen, but an outline on a computer is mutable.

Thus, an outliner is a powerful and flexible tool for storing and retrieving large quantities of information, for brainstorming and developing ideas, and much more. In other words, outlines are cool, but it's the outliner that makes all the difference.

How does an outliner make such a difference? It's because of the way the outliner presents the outline to you, the user. The outliner acts as an interface, mediating between you and the outline in helpful ways. In particular, an outliner obeys three mighty rules, or principles, of outline presentation. We'll learn about outliners by introducing each of those three rules in turn.

RULE 1: DAUGHTERS STAY WITH THEIR MOTHER

When you move a topic, all of its daughter topics (and all of their daughter topics, and so on) move with it. When you delete a topic, all of its daughter topics (and all of their daughter topics, and so on) are deleted as well. Thus, it's easy to perform major rearrangements of the outline.

For example, let's go back to our earlier small example outline listing cartoon characters:

▼ Cartoon characters
   ▼ Disney
      ▷ Mickey Mouse
      ▼ Donald Duck
         ▷ Huey
         ▷ Dewey
         ▷ Louie
      ▷ Pluto
      ▷ Goofy
   ▼ Warner
      ▷ Bugs Bunny
      ▷ Elmer Fudd

Now imagine that we want to rearrange the outline. In particular, suppose we decide, for some reason, that the Warner characters should precede the Disney characters in the outline. With an outliner such as Opal, making this change is a single, simple move. You simply select the Disney topic and choose Topic > Move Down.

Here's the result:

- ▼ Cartoon characters
  - ▼ Warner
    - ▷ Bugs Bunny
    - ▷ Elmer Fudd
  - ▼ Disney
    - ▷ Mickey Mouse
    - ▼ Donald Duck
      - ▷ Huey
      - ▷ Dewey
      - ▷ Louie
    - ▷ Pluto
    - ▷ Goofy

Look at how much rearrangement we were able to perform in a single operation! And yet, the outline has maintained its structural integrity. Why does this work? First, remember that an outline is an ordered hierarchy. In the hierarchy of our outline, "Disney" and "Warner" are sisters (they are daughters of the same topic, "Cartoon characters"). And they have an order — "Disney" comes first, then "Warner". The command Topic > Move Down means: Swap this topic with its *next sister* (the sister that comes immediately after it). The sister of "Disney" that comes immediately after it is "Warner". So those two topics change places. And when they move, all of their daughters move along with them.

You can immediately see the value of this behavior. In a flash, we've changed the order in which "Warner" and "Disney" appear in the list, but the outline as a whole remains "true": all the daughters of "Warner" are still Warner cartoon characters, and all the daughters of "Disney" are still Disney cartoon characters. The same thing would be the case if we were to copy "Disney", or cut it, and

then paste it into a different place in this outline or in a completely different outline (in a different Opal document): all its daughters would travel with it. Thus, the mother–daughter relationship becomes a powerful way to keep related things together as we rearrange and develop an outline.

RULE 2: DAUGHTERS CAN BE HIDDEN

Earlier, it was pointed out that an outline has effectively two dimensions. As a topic accumulates sisters, the outline grows in length. As a topic accumulates daughters, the outline grows in depth. But from the user's point of view, both of these dimensions cause the physical presentation of the outline to get longer; they make the page grow from top to bottom. Thus, existing earlier topics can get in our way when we want to work with later topics, because we have to scroll down (perhaps a very a long way) in order to reach the later topics.

Outliners solve this problem by letting you *hide* all the daughters of a mother topic. The mother topic is thus reduced to a single line. The daughters are still there; they just aren't being displayed at this moment. Thus, an outline can grow in length and depth without ever becoming inconveniently large. The outline may be large in reality, but its display can be quite small. This lets you work conveniently with the part of the outline you want to concentrate on.

Once again, let's return to our previous example outline:

- ▼ **Cartoon characters**
  - ▼ Disney
    - ▷ Mickey Mouse
    - ▼ Donald Duck
      - ▷ Huey
      - ▷ Dewey
      - ▷ Louie
    - ▷ Pluto
    - ▷ Goofy
  - ▼ Warner
    - ▷ Bugs Bunny
    - ▷ Elmer Fudd

Let's say we want to extend the "Warner" part of the list. And imagine that the "Disney" part of the list is long and getting in our way. No problem; we can simply hide all the daughters of the "Disney" topic, like this:

- ▼ **Cartoon characters**
  - ▶ Disney
  - ▼ Warner
    - ▷ Bugs Bunny
    - ▷ Elmer Fudd

From 12 topics, our outline has apparently been reduced to five topics. But only apparently. All the existing topics are actually still there; but some of them (the daughters of "Disney") are not presently being displayed. Opal indicates the presence of hidden daughters with a black right-facing triangle. In Opal, a topic with hidden daughters is said to be *collapsed* (and a topic whose daughters are visible is said to be *expanded*).

You can readily see how the ability to collapse and expand topics can make it easier to navigate and work with an outline. By contrast, think about how a word processor works. Most word processors are essentially linear, with page after page of material represented as a single continuum in the window. To reach a later part of the document, you have to scroll down until you get to it. So if your word processing document has 12 chapters and you want to work on Chapter 12, Chapters 1 through 11 are essentially in your way. But in an outliner, each chapter title could be a topic, with the paragraphs of the chapter as its daughters; so Chapter 1, Chapter 2, and so forth could be collapsed and thus would appear as a single line each. Indeed, for this very reason, some people like to use an outliner as a way of writing an article or a book, exporting to a word processor only when the task of creating and developing the book has been completed.

Note that the ability to collapse a topic does not prevent the previous rule (about daughters staying with their mother) from being obeyed. In the above example, the "Disney" topic is collapsed, so its daughters are not visible; but it still has daughters, and if we were to move the "Disney" topic its daughters would travel with it:

▼ Cartoon characters
   ▼ Warner
      ▷ Bugs Bunny
      ▷ Elmer Fudd
   ▶ Disney

At any later time, we can then expand the "Disney" topic and make its daughters visible:

▼ Cartoon characters
  ▼ Warner
    ▷ Bugs Bunny
    ▷ Elmer Fudd
  ▼ Disney
    ▷ Mickey Mouse
    ▼ Donald Duck
      ▷ Huey
      ▷ Dewey
      ▷ Louie
    ▷ Pluto
    ▷ Goofy

Thus, our first two rules work together, making it easy and convenient to work with an outline of any size and complexity.

RULE 3: THE HIERARCHY IS NAVIGABLE

The outliner hierarchy is simple but powerful. The ability to move around the outline in accordance with its hierarchy is crucial to your ease of use. This might not seem very important if you just look at the example outline we've been using, because the outline is so short, and the topics are so tiny, that you can see whole outline at a glance. But as an outline becomes large and complicated, and as its topics become long, finding your way around the outline can become a fairly daunting task. Or rather, it would be a daunting task if it weren't for this rule.

For example, a topic might be one of many sisters (multiple daughters of some single topic); while editing or working with such a topic, you might want to swap it with its

preceding sister, or you might just want to navigate up and see its preceding sister. With a good outliner, such as Opal, you can always do either of these things, with a single keystroke.

An even more compelling example is what happens when you want to navigate *up the hierarchy*. Let's take our example outline once more:

- ▼ Cartoon characters
    - ▼ Warner
        - ▷ Bugs Bunny
        - ▷ Elmer Fudd
    - ▼ Disney
        - ▷ Mickey Mouse
        - ▼ Donald Duck
            - ▷ Huey
            - ▷ Dewey
            - ▷ Louie
        - ▷ Pluto
        - ▷ Goofy

Suppose you're working on the "Louie" topic and you suddenly wonder exactly where in the outline you are. What's the mother of this topic, and what's the mother of this topic's mother? Of course, in our example, the answer is obvious, because your eye can take in the whole outline at a glance. But with a large, complicated outline with big topics, that might not be the case. There could be a large distance (in terms of scrolling space) between this topic and its mother. Nevertheless, a single keystroke always takes you directly to the present topic's mother. (In Opal, that keystroke would be Command-Left Arrow.)

So now you can see what this rule means. The hierarchy is not just the basis of the arrangement of topics; it's also the

basis of navigation of the outline. This is valuable particularly because the hierarchy is generally meaningful to you. (That's a point we'll get into more deeply in the next chapter.) You know where a topic is because you know something about its place within the hierarchy. The hierarchy is thus often your most natural way of navigating the outline, and it's essential that an outliner should give you a way to do this.

How to Use an Outliner

The title of this chapter is misleading, because no one can really tell you how to use an outliner. There are as many ways to use an outliner as there are outlines and people who use them. So the purpose of the chapter is not actually to prescribe to you how to use an outliner. It's really just the opposite: it's to describe to you some ways of using an outliner, and to help liberate your mind to create and develop and experiment and use an outliner in whatever way is natural and useful to you, given your own needs and purposes and the way your mind works.

The overall purpose of using an outliner is to take advantage of what an outline is and how an outliner lets you operate on an outline (the subjects that we covered in the previous two chapters). You have an ordered hierarchy of text snippets, one that is easy to rearrange and to navigate. How will you use this hierarchy? That's the question. The answer to that question will involve the fact that the outline is a hierarchy, but even more important, it will involve the fact that you are you. Different people think differently and work differently, so they use outliners in different ways. That's fine; in fact, it's the whole point! You're in charge; the outlines, and the outliner, will be whatever you make of them.

As a way of helping you think about what you might make of Opal, this chapter will simply present some sample kinds of outline along with suggestive ways of using them. Remember, the point here is not to tell you to use an outliner in these or any other particular ways; it's to

illustrate the fact that outlines and outliners are powerful and flexible and can be used in a limitless variety of ways.

THE "CLIFF'S NOTES" BOOK REPORT

Sometimes your outline's structure mirrors an obvious, existing structure inherent in the thing you're describing. For example, imagine a book report written by a lazy elementary school student. Our student doesn't really even describe the book; he just summarizes it. Every chapter of the book becomes a topic; events in each chapter become the chapter topic's subtopics.

- ▼ Gulliver's Travels
  - ▼ Part One: A Voyage To Lilliput
    - ▼ Chapter One
      - ▷ Gulliver goes to sea. There is a storm and the ship is broken on a rock. Gulliver and some of the crew escape in a lifeboat, but it is overturned and the others are lost. Gulliver reaches shore and falls asleep.
      - ▷ Gulliver awakens to find himself tied to the ground. He is surrounded by tiny people, six inches tall, who shoot him with arrows whenever he tries to move. He is given food and drink, and falls asleep again.
      - ▷ While Gulliver is asleep he is loaded with cranes and pulleys onto a wagon. The wagon is taken to a temple precinct in the little people's city, where Gulliver cannot escape, and he is released from his bonds.
    - ▼ Chapter Two
      - ▷ [and so on]

The nice thing about the Book Report type of outline is that you don't have to think very much about the structure of the outline. As the example suggests, this type of outline is particularly appropriate when you're taking descriptive notes on something that already has an explicit structure.

Sometimes, however, the structure of the thing you're taking notes on will not be completely obvious, so you might have to suspend judgement about the structure and

be willing, later on, to rearrange things somewhat. For example, if you're taking notes during a lecture, you might miss the fact that the lecturer has changed the subject, or the lecturer might leap to a different subject and then back to the first subject again. In this case, you can just keep taking notes and then later, when the lecture is over, you can take a few moments to rearrange your topics into more coherent subject categories. At this point we are already starting to shade over into the next type of outline, the Taxonomy.

THE TAXONOMY

In the Taxonomy outline, the purpose of the outline is to work out the categories to which things belong and then arrange them appropriately. The hierarchy is not obvious; in fact, you're likely to be using the outliner to help yourself discover the hierarchy.

For example, here's an outline representing a list of things to buy, arranged according to where we would have to be in order to obtain the items in question:

▾ Things I need
  ▾ At the grocery store
    ▷ peanut oil
    ▷ tofu
  ▾ At the lumberyard
    ▷ plywood
  ▾ At the bookstore (or at my computer, on the Internet)
    ▷ book about object-oriented programming

The hierarchical categorization here is something that you impose, based on your ideas about the topics. The hierarchy itself can evolve as you think further about the categories that are emerging. For example, in your shopping

list, you might decide definitely that a trip to the bookstore isn't worth it, so now you may find it useful to distinguish between things you have to obtain while out of the house and things you can obtain at home:

- ▼ Things I need
  - ▼ While out of the house
    - ▼ At the grocery store
      - ▷ peanut oil
      - ▷ tofu
    - ▼ At the lumberyard
      - ▷ plywood
  - ▼ While at home
    - ▼ at my computer, on the Internet
      - ▷ book about object-oriented programming

THE DATABASE

The Database outline is developed from the Taxonomy outline, but with a further consideration: you intend to use the outline as a form of information storage and retrieval. The key notion here is "retrieval"; you won't be able to retrieve information effectively if the hierarchy doesn't help you. So, as you impose your hierarchy, you want to keep it clear and obvious enough that you can later "drill down" through it to find any given topic.

This goal is easy to achieve if the database is relatively "flat." For example, you could use an outline to store phone numbers of friends. The obvious approach is to list your friends alphabetically, by last name. (Opal makes this arrangement easy, by letting you sort sister topics in alphabetical order.) In this example, the phone numbers

have been changed to a single fake number, to protect the innocent:

- ▼ Phone numbers of friends
  - ▼ Brown, Mary
    - ▷ 123-4567
  - ▼ Dunham, David
    - ▷ 123-4567
  - ▼ Fisher, John
    - ▼ home
      - ▷ 123-4567
    - ▼ work
      - ▷ 123-4567
    - ▼ cellphone
      - ▷ 123-4567
    - ▼ wife's cellphone
      - ▷ 123-4567

Imagine actually using that outline. You can see how we might take advantage of the powers of an outliner to let us locate the phone number we want. Let's say we wish to phone John Fisher. Start with all topics collapsed:

- ▶ **Phone numbers of friends**

We expand the top-level topic to reveal its immediate daughters, and behold, we see a list of names, alphabetically arranged:

- ▼ Phone numbers of friends
  - ▶ Brown, Mary
  - ▶ Dunham, David
  - ▶ Fisher, John

Because the list is in alphabetical order, finding "Fisher, John" is easy, so now we open his topic:

▾ **Phone numbers of friends**
  ▸ **Brown, Mary**
  ▸ **Dunham, David**
  ▾ **Fisher, John**
    ▸ home
    ▸ work
    ▸ cellphone
    ▸ wife's cellphone

He's got four phone numbers, so which one do we want? Let's try his cellphone:

▾ **Phone numbers of friends**
  ▸ **Brown, Mary**
  ▸ **Dunham, David**
  ▾ **Fisher, John**
    ▸ home
    ▸ work
    ▾ cellphone
      ▹ 123-4567
    ▸ wife's cellphone

This procedure is an example of "drilling down" to the appropriate topic. The order of topics in a Database outline doesn't have to be alphabetical as long as there are relatively few sisters or the order is one that's meaningful to you. Either way, you will be able to find the appropriate topic and drill down into it. An outline can be used to hold extraordinarily large amounts of information and yet be completely tractable, as long as the topics match the way your mind works.

For example, I have an outline containing all the myths about the Greek gods. If you ask me about a particular myth, I can find it right away; conversely, if I learn about a myth that isn't in the outline, I know immediately where to put it. That's because the hierarchy and ordering is meaningful to me, so that I can drill down through it accurately and rapidly. The same outline wouldn't be helpful to you, but I don't care about that; I developed the outline for my own use and no one else's.

THE BRAINSTORM

A Brainstorm outline is one where you don't initially worry very much, if at all, about the hierarchy. The idea is to create topics first and then worry about categorization later, taking full advantage of the fact that it's easy, with an outliner, to rearrange your outline. This can be an inspirational way to think and to develop ideas. By not restricting yourself initially to an imposed categorization, you escape the tyranny of hierarchical logic. By arriving at a categorization later, you discover new meaning in your original topics.

Any of the outlines used as examples already might have started life as a Brainstorm outline. For instance, the shopping list could have started out as a simple flat list of things needed:

▼ Things I need
  ▷ peanut oil
  ▷ book about object-oriented programming
  ▷ tofu
  ▷ plywood

After creating the list in more or less random order, as the ideas occur to you, then and only then you start to grapple with the fact that this list, as it stands, is not useful. By

thinking about how to make it useful, you come up with a categorization. In this case, we ultimately categorize the items according to where we would have to be in order to obtain them:

▼ Things I need
  ▼ While out of the house
    ▼ At the grocery store
      ▷ peanut oil
      ▷ tofu
    ▼ At the lumberyard
      ▷ plywood
  ▼ While at home
    ▼ at my computer, on the Internet
      ▷ book about object-oriented programming

More than anything else, it is this evolutionary aspect of an outline that deserves emphasis. If you start by trying to imagine a categorization, you may find yourself worrying about form without having any content, and this in turn may cause you to freeze up altogether. A more liberating way to use an outliner is to generate content — lots of content — and then let it rearrange itself into its appropriate categorization.

An extreme example might be our Gulliver's Travels outline in reverse. Let's suppose there is no book called *Gulliver's Travels;* instead, you are Jonathan Swift and you're going to write such a book. You might start by putting down some ideas for things that should happen in the course of the book, as they occur to you. Later you start to rearrange them into a logical order, and eventually you group them into chapters — thus arriving, ultimately, at something very like our "Cliff's Notes" Book Report outline. This scenario isn't at all far-fetched, since many people do in fact find it helpful to use an outliner as a writer's tool.