Analyzing Quotes Using Common Literary Devices

1. Assertion = A statement about human nature

Quote: Thirdly, Atwood states that children must renew outlooks when “the light fails” (23).

Analysis: Thus, Attwood uses darkness to assert that trauma-stricken children feel hopeless after a collapse of innocence.

Explanation: An assertion explains a part of human nature here that the author conveys

1. Claim = A statement about the nature of an idea or thing

Quote: Next, Atwood uses anecdote of a dejected, lonely child that states “I am not the favorite” (20).

Analysis: Therefore, the claim that the child feels unloved by their family helps Atwood to assert that some children who suffer feel neglected by family; they serve as a synecdoche for all unhappy children who lose their innocence and face emotional issues.

Explanation: The claim here helps to explain the details of the poem further.

1. Indirect Characterization = Represents the way something seems without a direct statement

Quote: Next, the upset man states “Had we but…time,” which exposes the eons he wishes to love his lady (1).

Analysis: As a result, the poet uses the man’s reproachful tone to indirectly characterize him as upset over the coy affair, which yields the external conflict of possible death.

Explanation: The indirect characterization better conveys the character of the man to explicate the situation.

1. Metaphor = A comparison made without using “like” or “as”

Quote: Likewise, the time-conscious man in the poem about the ephemeral nature of life declares, “into ashes all my lust” (30).

Analysis: Thus, the metaphor of “lust” dying, through a gloomy tone, evokes pathos via pity from those whose lovers die.

Explanation: The acknowledgement of the metaphor reveals the complexity of the comparison, which relates it to further explanations.

1. Metonymy = Likewise, the time-conscious man in the poem about the ephemeral nature of life declares, “into ashes all my lust” (30).

Analysis: The “ashes” reveal a metonymy for death to parallel the ephemeral nature of life, in which Marvell asserts that people often forget the possibility of death at any time.

Explanation: The metonymy for “ashes” brings drama into the explanation and reveals a deeper meaning to the phrase.

1. Situational Irony = Something unexpected that occurs

Quote: To exhibit true love’s persistence, the idea appears that as time persists with “his brief hours and weeks” true love never alters (11).

Analysis: The litote of “his brief hours,” which in reality signifies a lifetime of love, creates the situational irony that life seems too short for true lovers.

Explanation: The situational irony here relies on the hidden idea people always want more time in life to love.

1. Symbol = An idea that stands for another idea without statement

Quote: Atwood writes “sadness like an eyeless doll” to tell the effects of depression on children that lose their innocence (4).

Analysis: Likewise, the poet uses the symbol to create the morose tone of a child clinging to blind innocence, thus the assertion that children fear negativity.

Explanation: The dark symbol of an eyeless doll as an actual blindness to reality conveys an explanation for a deeper poetic meaning.

1. Tone = The attitude expressed through words

Quote: Likewise, the resolute speaker declares that love exists “to the edge of doom” (12).

Analysis: However, the poet uses an ominous tone through the word “doom” to suggest the claim that love lasts when nothing does; thus, a purpose for life exists: to love.