**books a dying art? don’t believe it rhetorical devices**

1. “escape the genre closet” is an example of a pun found in paragraph 4. To ‘come out of the closet’ is a colloquial term for publicly announcing one’s sexual orientation and no longer ‘hiding’ a part of their identity. Proulx talks about gay and lesbian novels as ‘coming out’ to show the positive changes that are occurring within the publishing community. This pun helps support her thesis that the book industry is not dying but flourishing in new and important ways.
2. “It’s possible that the premature obituaries” is an example of a metaphor found in paragraph 3. The author compares the idea that books are on the decline to a funeral announcement that has come too soon. When something is premature, it is too hasty while an obituary is an announcement that comes after someone has died. The use of this metaphor therefore emphasizes Proulx’s point that the notion that books are on the decline is as ridiculous as announcing someone’s death before it has happened.
3. “The computer as the asp on the map” is an example of a simile which is found in paragraph 6. This simile compares the computer to a dangerous snake to show it as the perceived threat to books. Snakes are seen as symbols of evil and temptation which is how technology is often viewed by society. Proulx goes on to refute this by stating that while computers are useful for utilitarian purposes, they will never replace books as no one wants to read on a “twitchy little screen”.
4. A rhetorical question found in paragraph 7 is “What are planes but flying reading rooms?” This device is effective because it causes the reader to reflect on the common experience of being in an airplane where everyone is reading. The answer to Proulx’s question is implied as everyone can reflect on such an experience and agree with her point. This supports her thesis and emphasizes her point that people can be found reading books everywhere and therefore books are still prevalent.
5. An example of an analogy is “probably the same thing they said when radio was invented, when television flickered its way into our living rooms” is found in paragraph 1. This analogy explains how people often worry that books will become obsolete when a new technology is introduced. Proulx does this to highlight that the idea that books are becoming unpopular is an old argument and one that has yet to prove true. This supports her thesis because the reader is likely to reflect on their experience and agree with this fact.
6. An example of personification is found in paragraph 6: “books speak even when they stand unopened on a shelf.” Most people have had the experience of looking at someone’s book collection and making a judgement about that person based on the books they read. This highlights the author’s claim that books are essential to who we are. By personifying the book, the author also reminds the reader how alive and vital literature is.

**Paragraph Functions**

Do this:

Paragraph 2 is an elaboration paragraph because it provides more information about the idea that society’s interest in books is declining. Proulx uses the examples of declining book sales, the changing nature of the novel and publishing houses to acknowledge the reasons for why people may think this way.

Do not do this:

Paragraph 2 is an elaboration paragraph because it supports the thesis and provides depth and breadth to the ideas presented. The arguments provided in paragraph 2 give more information that help the reader understand Proulx’s point of view. The information that Proulx elaborates on supports the thesis and makes the argument clear and convincing.

Do this:

Paragraph 4 is an example paragraph because it provides concrete examples of works of fiction from “Arab-Americans, African-Americans, Chinese-Americans”etc to reinforce the ideas that the book industry is developing in new ways. These examples remind the reader of the vast array of diverse stories that are now available to the public in an unprecedented way.

Do not do this:

Paragraph 4 is an example paragraph because it provides examples that support the author’s main argument. These examples are significant because they show how many other ideas there are that convince the reader of Proulx’s main argument. The thesis is more convincing because examples are provided and the reader can relate to them.