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Close Reading & Rhetorical Analysis with Justin Bieber's "Daisies"

Justin Bieber's hit song, "Daisies," offers a compelling argument that blends romance, vulnerability, and uncertainty... and upon its release, it instantly climbed to the top of the charts. In this exercise, you'll get to unpack the rhetorical moves that Bieber weaves throughout the song by analyzing the intentional word choice, rhetorical devices, and overarching structure that makes it effective.

Using the graphic organizer below, examine the language that Bieber uses throughout the lyrics. In the left-column, you will find excerpted lyrics, in the middle-column, you will find guiding questions to help steer your analysis, and in the right-column, you will find space to jot down your own questions, notes, and insights.

Be thoughtful and thorough in your analysis, and be prepared to use your notes for a deeper discussion to follow!

Excerpted Lyrics	Guiding Questions	Your Notes & Analysis
Throwin' petals like, "Do you love me or not?"	Why does the speaker open the argument with an image of "<i>throwin' petals</i>"...? What well known sentiment does this imagery evoke? How might this opening metaphor already frame the rest of the argument? (Is this suggestion of uncertainty regarding the speaker's romantic pursuit already setting the tone for what's to come?) Consider the specific word choices used by the speaker here. Rather than to use some of the language that's associated with the traditional petal-plucking metaphor ("she loves me, she loves me not"), he uses "<u>you</u>." Why does the speaker intentionally make this choice? How does it impact the argument differently from the alternative?	
Head is spinnin', and it don't know when to stop	What kind of tone or mood does this language suggest? What is the speaker hoping to convey here? (Emotional or psychological turmoil? Something else?) Further, how else might the speaker have conveyed these feelings or ideas? Why does he choose the convey them in this particular way instead? It's clear that the speaker is using informal speech rather than standard and formal English grammar. Why? What is the intended effect? (How is the speaker's decision to say "<i>it don't know when to stop</i>" rhetorically different from saying, "it <u>doesn't</u> know when to stop" ...?)	

'Cause you said, "Forever," babe, did you mean it or not?	How does the use of direct quotation function rhetorically here? (The speaker is citing evidence in this line! Why? How else might he have phrased this question?) What tension is the speaker intentionally creating by questioning a promise? What is already revealed about the speaker, the audience he is addressing, and the relationship between the two?	
Hold on, hold on	Analyze this subtle moment in the song. What can be inferred by the speaker saying, "<i>Hold on, hold on</i>"...? (When might you ever have to say "hold on" in a conversation? When you are being interrupted? When another person is trying to interject their thoughts before you are finished speaking?) Unpack this! Why repeat this phrase? How does repetition contribute to the argument's tone, rhythm, or emotional urgency?	
You leave me on read, babe, but I still get the message	The speaker shifts the argument's imagery from the flowery stuff of "petals" and the timeless, romantic ideas of "forever" to this: a specific reference to the feeling that is stirred when a text message is sent, marked "read" (showing that the recipient has received and apparently read it), and not responded to. Why does the speaker include this specific digital reference? Consider who would "get" this, and who wouldn't. What might that reveal about the speaker's target audience? Also consider how the speaker might have described this feeling differently without actually referencing digital technology. What's the difference between both techniques? And what's the rhetorical impact of the strategy being implement by the speaker here? The speaker takes this line a step further when he indicates that in spite of being "<i>left on read</i>," he still "<i>get[s] the message</i>." (Ha-ha! See what he did there?) What is the intended rhetorical effect of this particular line, and what might it suggest about the speaker's emotional state? About his interpretation of being "<i>left on read</i>"...?	

Instead of a line, it's three dots, but I can connect them	Once again, the speaker makes a direct reference to an animation that is taking place on his phone. In this case, he refers to seeing three dots signaling that someone is typing, rather than seeing an actual message received. Analyze this! What does this reveal about both the speaker and the audience? (That he is staring at his screen and analyzing the appearance of those three dots? That the person he is speaking to is actually typing something, even if they never send it and leave him "<i>on read</i>"...?) The speaker offers another pun (similar to the previous line and "<i>get[ting] the message</i>") as he indicates he can "<i>connect</i>" the dots. What is the rhetorical effect of this wordplay? How does it contribute to the argument the speaker is crafting? Take some time to unpack the additional layers of meaning that might be provided by the "three dots." Does this build on the idea of ambiguity? What might it imply about the speaker's intuition or desperation?	
And if it ain't right, babe, you know I'll respect it	What does the speaker mean by this? And how does this assertion reflect the speaker's ethos? (What can you infer about the speaker, based on this line?) What tone does this line infuse into the argument?	
But if you need time, just take your time	The speaker intentionally offers a repetition of the word "<i>time</i>," when he could have chosen to rephrase this line in many other ways. Why? What might this repetition of "<i>time</i>" emphasize? Extend your analysis of the speaker, the audience he's addressing, and the connection between the two. What else might this line suggest about their relationship?	
Honey, I get it, I get it, I get it	Similar to the speaker's earlier repetition of the phrase, "<i>Hold on</i>," he repeats the words, "<i>I get it, I get it, I get it</i>." Why? What is the tone here? (Is it calm? Pleading? Resigned? Something else?) In what ways is this similar to the "<i>Hold on</i>" line, and in what ways is it different?	

	A moment ago, the speaker refers to the audience he is addressing as “<i>babe</i>,” and here, he refers to her as “<i>honey</i>.” Why? As you did earlier, extend your analysis of the speaker, the audience he’s addressing, and their relationship. What might this language reveal that was not previously known?	
Way you got me all in my head	How does this line introduce (or affirm) a sense of the speaker’s obsession or anxiety? Is it framed in a positive or problematic way? Consider the rhetorical effect that this line is intended to have on the argument. (In other words, what is the speaker trying to accomplish with this line? Is it effective?)	
Think I’d rather you in my bed	The speaker momentarily shifts the emotional tone of the argument from abstract and emotional to physical and intimate. Why? How does this moment contribute to the argument? How would the argument be different if this line were omitted?	
Whatever it is, you know I can take it	First, consider what the speaker might be hoping to communicate or convey with this line. (Perhaps the speaker’s emotional resilience? Vulnerability? General sense of credibility?) Then, analyze <u>why</u> he is deliberately attempting to convey that. From a rhetorical standpoint, what’s the purpose? How does it contribute to the argument? What is he hoping this line will achieve?	
I’m countin’ the days, how many days ‘til I can see you again?	How does the speaker’s anticipation (and that ongoing sense of uncertainty) serve the emotional arc of the argument? Analyze the mechanics of this rhetorical device: the speaker <u>states</u> that he is counting the days, and before the sentence ends, he <u>demonstrates</u> that he is counting the days. Why does he structure the line in this way? What’s the intended impact? Is it effective?	

Blowin' kisses like, "Will you catch 'em or not?"	The speaker opens the second verse in a manner that mirrors the opening line with the petals. Compare and contrast these lines! What elements do they share? How are they similar? How are they different? How do they each successfully contribute to the overarching argument?	
I'm Cupid with arrows, babe, I'm just shootin' my shot, mm-mm	Why might the speaker have invoked the Cupid metaphor in this line? How does this moment continue to shape our understanding of the speaker's boldness, as well as his vulnerability?	
If I could get in, drop me a pin, hop in the whip and come over	The speaker continues to use casual language, and once again, infuses a technological phone-related reference (" <i>drop me a pin</i> ") into this line. Why? Analyze the specific word choice used by the speaker. Then, consider what else this moment might reveal about the immediacy or modernity of their relationship.	
Don't wanna be friends, just skin-to-skin, I wanna get closer and closer and closer	In this line, the speaker seems to articulate the obvious; he explains that he wants to be "more than friends" with the person he's speaking to. But why does he make this confession in this particular way, with these specific words? (Why " <i>don't wanna be friends</i> " and not, "I wanna be lovers"...? Why " <i>skin-to-skin</i> " and not something else like, "hand-in-hand"...?) Analyze the language that the speaker has deliberately chosen to serve his argument. Why might the speaker have used the repetition of " <i>closer</i> " in this line? What might it reveal about the speaker's emotional or physical desire? And how is this conveyed through simple repetition?	
You got me all, all, my love, All in my feelings, babe. And you got me all, I've been all in my feelings. And you got me all, all weak in my knees every time. 'Cause you got me all, all in my feelings	As the speaker draws the argument to its close, he offers multiple repetitions that affirm, " <i>You got me all.</i> " What is the intention of echoing this sentiment again and again as the argument nears its end? How might this line once again highlight the speaker's vulnerability? What is he actually saying here?	

	How do these lines serve the argument's overarching message? And how do they serve the argument's purpose?	
I'm countin' the days, how many days 'til I can see you again?	The argument ends with a final repetition of this particular line. Why? What's the effect of ending with this question? Does it offer a sense of closure or does it prolong the speaker's emotional uncertainty? How does it contribute to the larger argument?	

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Unpacking the Argument in Justin Bieber's "Daisies"

Now that you've conducted a close reading and rhetorical analysis of Justin Bieber's hit song, "Daisies," take some time to analyze the argument with regard to the rhetorical triangle and rhetorical appeals. Use the table below to organize your thoughts and your analysis.

What do you know about the speaker? What insights have been revealed, and which <i>specific</i> moments in the text reveal them? How do these understandings about the speaker contribute to the strength of the argument?	What do you know about the audience? (Are there multiple audiences, e.g. the speaker's romantic interest... and the general public that's listening in to the song?) Use textual evidence to substantiate your claims. What has been revealed about the relationship between the speaker and his audience? How do these understandings contribute to the strength of the argument?	What is the message that the speaker is trying to convey here? (Don't confuse "message" with "purpose." The question here is "<u>what is he saying?</u>" ...which is different than, "why is he saying it?") Explore the relationship between this message and (1) the speaker, and (2) the audience.
In what ways, if any, does the speaker appeal to ethos? (How might he try to foster <u>credibility</u>, or even <u>likability</u>, so that the audience values, respects, or believes what he says?) Is it effective?	In what ways, if any, does the speaker appeal to pathos? (How might he try to purposefully evoke emotions from the audience? Which emotions are evoked? How and why?) Is it effective?	In what ways, if any, does the speaker appeal to logos? (Does he construct, or give the appearance of constructing, a logical, rational progression of ideas?) Is it effective?
What is this argument's purpose? (Why is the speaker delivering THAT message to THAT audience? What is his motive? What might he be trying to accomplish through this argument?)	Is this argument effective? Where is it most effective, and what makes those moments so strong? Where is it least effective, and how might those moments be improved? Use textual evidence to support your ideas!	

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Comparing & Contrasting Justin Bieber's "Daisies" with Pablo Neruda's "If You Forget Me"

Now that you've closely read and unpacked Justin Bieber's hit song "Daisies," it's time to consider another argument that makes some similar rhetorical moves.

In the graphic organizer below, you'll find Pablo Neruda's poem, "If You Forget Me," excerpted in the left-column. Closely read, unpack, and analyze this lovely piece! And as you do, take note of any similarities and differences between Neruda's "If You Forget Me" and Bieber's "Daisies."

Pablo Neruda's "If You Forget Me"	Notes & Analysis
I want you to know one thing. You know how this is: if I look at the crystal moon, at the red branch of the slow autumn at my window, if I touch near the fire the impalpable ash or the wrinkled body of the log, everything carries me to you, as if everything that exists, aromas, light, metals, were little boats that sail toward those isles of yours that wait for me. Well, now, if little by little you stop loving me I shall stop loving you little by little. If suddenly you forget me do not look for me, for I shall already have forgotten you.	

If you think it long and mad,
the wind of banners
that passes through my life,
and you decide
to leave me at the shore
of the heart where I have roots,
remember
that on that day,
at that hour,
I shall lift my arms
and my roots will set off
to seek another land.

But
if each day,
each hour,
you feel that you are destined for me
with implacable sweetness,
if each day a flower
climbs up to your lips to seek me,
ah my love, ah my own,
in me all that fire is repeated,
in me nothing is extinguished or forgotten,
my love feeds on your love, beloved,
and as long as you live it will be in your arms
without leaving mine.

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Mapping Your Analysis: Justin Bieber’s “Daisies” & Pablo Neruda’s “If You Forget Me”

Use the graphic organizer below to consolidate your analysis of Justin Bieber’s “Daisies” and Pablo Neruda’s “If You Forget Me.” Be sure to be thorough and thoughtful in your analysis, and be prepared to use your notes for a deeper discussion or essay!

	Differences Specific To Bieber’s “Daisies”	Similarities Across Both Arguments	Differences Specific To Neruda’s “If You Forget Me”
Speaker			
Audience			
Message			
Purpose			
Language & Devices Used			

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Essay: Synthesizing Justin Bieber's "Daisies" & Pablo Neruda's "If You Forget Me"

Both Pablo Neruda's poem "If You Forget Me" and Justin Bieber's song "Daisies" center around a similar rhetorical purpose: **To express deep emotional vulnerability and to influence a loved one's response to uncertainty in their relationship.**

However, the rhetorical situations of these two arguments differ (from audience, to speaker, to context), and as a result, each speaker takes a distinct rhetorical path in each respective text.

In a well-developed essay, **analyze how each speaker uses rhetorical strategies** (including tone, structure, diction, metaphor, repetition, and any pertinent rhetorical appeals) to convey their message. Then, compare how these strategies reflect the differences in each rhetorical situation. Consider how the speaker's identity, context, and audience shape their choices.

Your essay should:

- Identify each speaker's core message and motivation / overarching purpose
- Analyze at least two rhetorical strategies from each text
- Discuss how the rhetorical situation (speaker, audience, message, purpose) informs the speaker's choices
- Evaluate which speaker's approach is more compelling or effective, and why
- Support all claims with specific evidence from the texts.

Prewriting & Notes

Rough Draft Due: _____

Final Draft Due: _____