

## **Lexical and Contextual Meaning in the Off-Season Album By J. Cole**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This research analyzes the lexical and contextual meanings found in selected song lyrics from the album *The Off-Season* by J. Cole. The purpose of this study is to analyze how language is used by artists to convey deeper meanings, emotions, and social commentary through dictionary-based definitions (lexical meaning) and meanings derived from context (contextual meaning). This research uses a descriptive qualitative method, focusing on several songs that contain rich linguistic and cultural content. This research found 53 lyric lines that contain lexical and contextual meaning in the whole album *The Off-Season* by J. Cole. The results of the analysis show that J. Cole often uses figurative language, slang, metaphors, and culturally embedded expressions to deliver messages about identity, struggle, success, and social issues. The findings suggest that understanding lexical and contextual meanings is crucial to interpreting the depth and intent of J. Cole's lyrics. This research aims to contribute to the wider field of linguistics, particularly in the areas of semantics and discourse analysis in music and popular culture.

#### **Keywords:**

Lexical Meaning, Contextual Meaning, Semantics, J. Cole, Hip-Hop Lyrics

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## **INTRODUCTION**

J. Cole, whose real name is Jermaine Lamarr Cole, was born on January 28, 1985, in Frankfurt, Germany, and grew up in Fayetteville, North Carolina. He discovered his love for rap early in life, initially performing under the names Blaza and Therapist before settling on J. Cole's own name. Today, J. Cole is recognized as a critically acclaimed rapper and songwriter, known for embedding complex messages within his lyrics. One of his most significant works, *The Off-Season* (2021), is considered his most introspective and lyrically dense album, showcasing themes of struggle, social issues, ambition, fame, and self-reflection. As a result, the album provides a rich resource for linguistic analysis, particularly in relation to semantics.

Language in music, particularly in hip-hop, is not only a form of entertainment but also a medium for expression, identity construction, and cultural commentary. Lyrics in rap music are widely acknowledged as tools for constructing local and cultural identity (Benvenga, 2022). However, despite the rich potential for linguistic exploration, many studies on rap and hip-hop primarily focus on their social, cultural, or psychological impacts, leaving a gap in semantic analysis—especially in distinguishing lexical and contextual meanings in lyrical discourse. This gap highlights the need to explore J. Cole's lyrical choices beyond their surface-level entertainment value, focusing instead on how meanings are constructed and interpreted in varying contexts.

Linguistics, as a scientific and academic discipline, examines the structure and function of language across different levels, ranging from sound systems to discourse (Thoms et al., 2021). Its applications span multiple fields, including psychology, anthropology, literature, and education. Within this discipline, semantics—specifically lexical and contextual meaning—plays a central role in understanding meaning-making. Lexical meaning refers to the fixed or denotative meaning of a word (Wulandari & Fadilla, 2023), while contextual meaning involves interpretation based on surrounding circumstances, situational context, and cultural references (Wijaya & Rosita, 2023). In hip-hop lyrics, the use of metaphor, wordplay, and socio-political references

makes both lexical and contextual interpretation essential for uncovering deeper layers of meaning.

The innovation of this research lies in its attempt to bridge linguistic theory and hip-hop lyricism through semantic analysis of J. Cole's *The Off-Season*. Unlike prior studies that focus predominantly on hip-hop's cultural or social significance, this study emphasizes a detailed examination of how lexical and contextual meanings interact to create multi-layered interpretations. By applying semantic analysis to J. Cole's lyrics, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of language in music, highlighting its role not only in artistic expression but also in shaping cultural discourse and identity.

## **METHODS**

This study adopted a descriptive qualitative design, as it was intended to explore and interpret meanings rather than measure variables. Qualitative inquiry is appropriate for semantic research since it allows a detailed examination of words, phrases, and expressions in their natural contexts (Creswell, 2014). Through this approach, the analysis focused on identifying both lexical meanings, grounded in dictionary definitions, and contextual meanings, rooted in cultural and situational usage.

The object of analysis consisted of selected lyrics from J. Cole's *The Off-Season* album. The selection process was guided by purposive sampling, in which only lines that contained potential semantic ambiguity or cultural references were chosen. This strategy ensured that the data would reveal the richness of language beyond literal expression. The corpus was drawn primarily from verified lyric sources such as Genius.com, which provide annotated explanations that were later cross-checked with scholarly references and cultural materials.

Data collection involved transcribing and categorizing lyrical excerpts into manageable units of analysis. Each line was first identified as a unit and then examined for keywords, metaphors, slang, or idioms. This process enabled the researcher to systematically distinguish between lexical meaning, which refers to dictionary-based interpretations, and contextual meaning, which requires situational or cultural background to be fully understood.

To guide the analysis, the study employed semantic and pragmatic frameworks. Palmer's (2015) theory of lexical meaning was used to classify denotative meanings of words, while Sperber and Wilson's (1995) relevance theory provided a lens to examine how context influences interpretation. These theoretical foundations ensured that the analysis was not limited to surface-level understanding but extended toward pragmatic and cultural layers of meaning.

The procedure of analysis followed three major stages. First, the lyrics were read and coded for significant lexical items. Second, each item was assigned its dictionary-based meaning as the baseline interpretation. Finally, the same items were analyzed through their contextual usage, supported by cultural references such as hip-hop slang, social issues, and biographical details of the artist. This step-by-step process allowed the researcher to highlight contrasts between lexical and contextual meaning.

To enhance validity, the study relied on triangulation of sources. Explanations from online lyric databases were compared with scholarly literature on hip-hop linguistics and cultural studies. Where possible, interviews and commentaries from the artist were also consulted to clarify intended meanings. This cross-verification reduced the risk of misinterpretation and strengthened the credibility of findings.

The role of the researcher was central in interpreting the data. As Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggest, qualitative research acknowledges the researcher as the primary instrument of data analysis. Reflexivity was maintained by documenting interpretive choices, ensuring that the analysis remained transparent and justifiable. This also involved acknowledging potential bias, particularly in interpreting culturally embedded slang unfamiliar to the researcher's own context.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1.** Lyrics in 95. south song that contains lexical and contextual meaning

No	Lyrics
1.	"Cole been goin' plat' since back when CDs was around"
2.	"What you sold, I tripled that, I can't believe these (all) clowns"
3.	"I be stayin' out the way, but if the beef do come around"
4.	"Could put a M right on your head, you Luigi brother now"
5.	"Krispy Kreme dreams, sometimes my dawgs wanna kill 12"

Based on the Table 1 above, it can be seen that the word "plat" in the sentence "Cole Been goin' plat' since back when CDs was around" has the lexical meaning of chemical element or reactive metal. But in contextual meaning it refers to Platinum records (award) where the song has been sold one million units. It refers to the success achieved in song sales that J. Cole did since the CD era or before the digital (stream) era.

The word "clowns" in the sentence "What you sold, I tripled that, I can't believe these (all) clowns" has the lexical meaning of comedian or people that make others laugh with silly joke. But in contextual meaning it refers to people (or specifically referring to rappers) who cannot be trusted or always lose. It refers to J. Cole's distrust of rappers who cheat or lie in the sale of songs.

The word "beef" in the sentence "I be stayin' out the way, but if the beef do come around" has the lexical meaning of the flesh of the cow or meat. But in contextual meaning it refers to conflict between rappers, often expressed through diss tracks. It means that J. Cole's participation when there is a dispute between rappers involving J. Cole.

The word "M" in the sentence "Could put a M right on your head, you Luigi brother now" has the lexical meaning of alphabetical letters. But in contextual meaning it refers to slang for Million-dollar, but for the wordplay M refers to Mario. It refers to wordplay to suggest that Cole could put a million-dollar bounty on his opposition's head and also wordplay of Mario and Luigi (Super Mario Bros) that wearing a red hat with an "M" on it.

The word "12" in the sentence "Krispy Kreme dreams, sometimes my dawgs wanna kill 12" has the lexical meaning of numbers. But in contextual meaning it refers to slang for police. It means that J. Cole's friends sometimes wanted to kill police.

**Table 2.** Lyrics in amari song that contains lexical and contextual meaning

No	Lyrics
1.	"Plottin' my escape, this <b>game</b> rotten, (peoples) fake"
2.	"Got a couple <b>M's</b> hidin' in the safe"
3.	"Now I'm at the <b>Garden</b> sittin' half court"
4.	"Watchin' <b>Jr.</b> catch it off the backboard"
5.	" <b>2-6</b> , murder scene pumping"
6.	" <b>Twelve</b> comin', we ain't seen nothing"
7.	"Want <b>smoke</b> ? (People) don't choke"

Based on the Table 2 above, it can be seen that the word "game" in the sentence "Plottin' my escape, this game rotten, (peoples) fake" has the lexical meaning of places where plants such as grass and flowers grow. But in contextual meaning it refers to hip-hop industry or rap game. It refers to J. Cole's escape plan from the hip hop industry or rap game because of fake rappers.

The word "M's" in the sentence "Got a couple M's hidin' in the safe" has the lexical meaning of alphabetical letters. But in contextual meaning it refers to slang for million-dollar. It refers to the 1 million dollars or more that J. Cole kept in the safe.

The word "Garden" in the sentence "Now I'm at the Garden sittin' half court" has the lexical meaning of a places where plants such as grass and flowers grow. But in contextual meaning it refers to Madison Square Garden (indoor arena) in New York. It refers to the success of J. Cole was at Madison Square Garden to perform or just enjoy the NBA show.

The word "Jr." in the sentence "Watchin' Jr. catch it off the backboard" has the lexical meaning of numbers. But in contextual meaning it refers to American professional basketball player Dennis Smith Jr.. It refers to J. Cole was watching Dennis Smith Jr. at the NBA game.

The word “2-6” in the sentence “2-6, murder scene pumping” has the lexical meaning of numbers. But in contextual meaning it refers to ZIP code for Fayetteville, North Carolina. It refers to 27526, J. Cole’s hometown, Fayetteville, North Carolina.

The word “Twelve” in the sentence “Twelve comin', we ain't seen nothing” has the lexical meaning of numbers. But in contextual meaning it refers to slang for police. It refers to the statements of J. Cole and the people around him when the police arrived.

The word “smoke” in the sentence “Want smoke? (People) don't choke” has the lexical meaning of gas produced when something burns or cigarettes. But in contextual meaning it refers to slang for confrontation or conflict. It refers to J. Cole's question about people who want to find trouble with J. Cole.

**Table 3.** Lyrics in my lfe song that contains lexical and contextual meaning

No	Lyrics
1.	“So while some of my partners was servin’ up rocks on the corners, the project assemblies”
2.	“I let the K go when Johnny died”
3.	“I see chicken, you (people) is breast to me”

Based on the Table 3 above, it can be seen that the word “rocks” in the sentence “So while some of my partners was servin' up rocks on the corners, the project assemblies” has the lexical meaning of solid compose made up of minerals. But in contextual meaning it refers to slang for cocaine. It refers to J. Cole's friends selling cocaine on street corner.

The word “K” in the sentence “I let the K go when Johnny died” has the lexical meaning of alphabetical letters. But in contextual meaning it refers to stands for AK-47. It means that 21 Savage took revenge using an AK-47.

The word “Chicken and breast” in the sentence “I see chicken, you (people) is breast to me” has the lexical meaning of animal type of bird and organ located on the chest. But in contextual meaning it refers to wordplay for chicken-breast that aim to his enemy that the enemy is soft or easy to beat. It refers to 21 Savage who underestimated the opponent.

**Table 4.** Lyrics in applying pressure song that contains lexical and contextual meaning

No	Lyrics
1.	“And nines showing like they in they second trimesters”
2.	“(Thing) crazy, didn't know I got more M's than a real Slim Shady video”
3.	“I can cap and say that I never scratched my jealousy's itch”

Based on the Table 4 above, it can be seen that the word “nines” in the sentence “And nines showing like they in they second trimesters” has the lexical meaning of numbers. But in contextual meaning it refers to slang for a 9mm pistol. It refers to people who carry 9mm pistols such as pregnant mothers.

The word “M’s” in the sentence “(Thing) crazy, didn't know I got more M's than a real Slim Shady video” has the lexical meaning of alphabetical letters. But in contextual meaning it refers to slang for Million-dollar. It means that J. Cole previously did not realize that he had a million dollars more than the number of viewers of the video clip “Eminem - The Real Slim Shady”.

The word “cap” in the sentence “I can cap and say that I never scratched my jealousy's itch” has the lexical meaning of kind of softs flat hat or cover for an object. But in contextual meaning it refers to slang for something untrue or lie. It means that J. Cole admitted J. Cole could have lied.

**Table 5.** Lyrics in punchin the clock song that contains lexical and contextual meaning

No	Lyrics
1.	“I got more cribs than Habitat for Humanity”
2.	“Ran in the crib and played it off amongst the family”
3.	“Like a Que Dog, my (people) burnin' with the mute off”

Based on the Table 5 above, it can be seen that the word “cribs” in the sentence “I got more cribs than Habitat for Humanity” has the lexical meaning of thing for baby to sleep in it. But in

contextual meaning it refers to slang for house. It means that J. Cole claimed had more houses than habitats for humans.

The word “crib” in the sentence “Ran in the crib and played it off amongst the family” has the lexical meaning of thing for baby to sleep in it. But in contextual meaning it refers to slang for house. It means that J. Cole running to J. Cole’s parent’s house and acting like nothing happened.

The word “burnin’” in the sentence “Like a Que Dog, my (people) burnin’ with the mute off” has the lexical meaning of things that are heated by the fire. But in contextual meaning it refers to violence or the black struggle. It refers to J. Cole’s friends who were victims of violence but no one came to their aid.

**Table 6.** Lyrics in 100. mil song that contains lexical and contextual meaning

No	Lyrics
1.	“Got a little guap, when you get a lot, won’t no (woman) leave you on read”
2.	“This game is like follow the leader, if you looking closely enough, then you’ll see that I led”
3.	“I’m bleeding from fighting my demons head up”
4.	“Can’t leave the game yet, I feel like LeBron”

Based on the Table 6 above, it can be seen that the word “read” in the sentence “Got a little guap, when you get a lot, won’t no (woman) leave you on read” has the lexical meaning of activities to see and understand the context of writing. But in contextual meaning it refers to no texting back while get message. It means that if have a lot of money, there will be no women who ignore.

The word “game” in the sentence “This game is like follow the leader, if you looking closely enough, then you’ll see that I led” has the lexical meaning of something can be played. But in contextual meaning it refers to hip-hop industry or rap game. It means that J. Cole claims that J. Cole is the leader in the hip hop industry or rap game.

The word “bleeding” in the sentence “I’m bleeding from fighting my demons head up” has the lexical meaning of blood that comes out of the body. But in contextual meaning it refers to close to defeat. It refers to J. Cole’s near defeat when fighting the demon in J. Cole’s mind.

The word “game” in the sentence “Can’t leave the game yet, I feel like LeBron” has the lexical meaning of something can be played. But in contextual meaning it refers to hip-hop industry or rap game also refers to basketball game (NBA). It means that J. Cole could not leave the rap game like LeBron who could not leave the NBA game.

**Table 7.** Lyrics in pride is the devil song that contains lexical and contextual meaning

No	Lyrics
1.	“Pride hide the pain of growing up in hell and poverty”
2.	“Got racks on racks, I’m rackin’ up”
3.	“Making five a month, that’s regular”
4.	“(People) playing with us, that’s a negative”
5.	“Told my twin this (thing) get better”

Based on the Table 7 above, it can be seen that the word “hell” in the sentence “Pride hide the pain of growing up in hell and poverty” has the lexical meaning of place after-death for people full of sin. But in contextual meaning it refers to neighbourhood full of crime activities (gun violence, drug dealing, etc.). It means that pride hides the pain of growing up in an environment of violence and poverty.

The word “racks” in the sentence “Got racks on racks, I’m rackin’ up” has the lexical meaning of objects made from frames for storage. But in contextual meaning it refers to slang for large amount of money. It means that money income that continues to be earned.

The word “five” in the sentence “Making five a month, that’s regular” has the lexical meaning of numbers. But in contextual meaning it refers to money earned (5,000\$ – 500,000\$). It means that Lil Baby earns 5,000\$ - 500,000\$ in 1 month.

The word “playing” in the sentence “(People) playing with us, that’s a negative” has the lexical meaning of activity of doing the game. But in contextual meaning it refers to disruptive such as telling lies and looking for trouble. It means that impossible to mess with Lil Baby and J. Cole.

The word “twin” in the sentence “Told my twin this (thing) get better” has the lexical meaning of siblings who have identical similarities. But in contextual meaning it refers to slang for brothers or close friends. It refers to Lil Baby’s close friend.

**Table 8.** Lyrics in let go my hand song that contains lexical and contextual meaning

No	Lyrics
1.	“I probably heard it before, but slept on it, you know?”
2.	“I wanna be my biggest fan, like how I was when didn't nobody know my jams”

Based on the Table 8 above, it can be seen that the word “slept” in the sentence “I probably heard it before, but slept on it, you know” has the lexical meaning of falling asleep. But in contextual meaning it refers to skip it. It means that J. Cole’s disinterest in instrumentals back then.

The word “jams” in the sentence “I wanna be my biggest fan, like how I was when didn't nobody know my jams” has the lexical meaning of flavoured spreads for bread. But in contextual meaning it refers to slang term for favourite. It refers to J. Cole’s music taste.

**Table 9.** Lyrics in interlude song that contains lexical and contextual meaning

No	Lyrics
1.	“This Southern heat make unbearable summers”
2.	“Couldn't dare touch it if they sold a double disc”
3.	“Block hot, (people) burnin' up the street”
4.	“He sold more Coca-Cola than the soda industry”
5.	“Hella blues like the Rollin' 60s”

Based on the Table 9 above, it can be seen that the word “heat” in the sentence “This Southern heat make unbearable summers” has the lexical meaning of hot or warm temperature. But in contextual meaning it refers to double meaning for warmest summer temperatures and gun violence. It refers to the Southern region which has more shootouts in the summer.

The word “double disc” in the sentence “Couldn't dare touch it if they sold a double disc” has the lexical meaning of two portable digital data storage media. But in contextual meaning it refers to manipulate the music market data. It refers to rappers who manipulate song sales data.

The word “hot and burnin’” in the sentence “Block hot, (people) burnin' up the street” has the lexical meaning of things that are heated by the fire. But in contextual meaning it refers to neighborhoods that contain criminal crimes such as gun violence. It refers to the crime that occurred in the area where J. Cole’s lives such as the shootout. The word “Coca-Cola” in the sentence “He sold more Coca-Cola than the soda industry” has the lexical meaning of carbonated drinks. But in contextual meaning it refers to slang or wordplay for crack cocaine. It means that J. Cole’s friend sold large quantities of cocaine.

The word “blues” in the sentence “Hella blues like the Rollin' 60s” has the lexical meaning of color in the primary colors. But in contextual meaning it refers to feeling of sadness. It refers to the feeling of sadness (feeling blue) and word play referring to the Crip gang (which shows gang identity with the color all blue).

**Table 10.** Lyrics in the climb back song that contains lexical and contextual meaning

No	Lyrics
1.	“And paint the town red for my (friend) found dead too soon”
2.	“To the left of that decimal, I need seven figures to play the joint”
3.	“Enough straps to fill four U-Hauls”
4.	“Around these parts we pour the brown just to drown these thoughts”
5.	“Bassmasters, look how they tote a pole”
6.	“Make a diamond, they just rhymin', me, I'm quotin' gold”

No	Lyrics
7.	"Just got off the phone, my (friend), he back in the kennel, my dog lost"

Based on the Table 10 above, it can be seen that the word "paint and red" in the sentence "And paint the town red for my (friend) found dead too soon" has the lexical meaning of coloring activity and color in the primary colors. But in contextual meaning it refers to taking revenge on his friend's murderer by spilling blood.

The word "joint" in the sentence "To the left of that decimal, I need seven figures to play the joint" has the lexical meaning of bones meet and connect. But in contextual meaning it refers to a song or making music together with another rapper (featuring). It refers to the amount that must be paid to J. Cole if want to invite to perform or invite collaboration to make a song together.

The word "straps" in the sentence "Enough straps to fill four U-Hauls" has the lexical meaning of leather rope for tying or fastening something. But in contextual meaning it refers to slang terms for guns. It means that the weapons that J. Cole has, enough to fill four U-Haul trucks.

The word "brown" in the sentence "Around these parts we pour the brown just to drown these thoughts" has the lexical meaning of composite color. But in contextual meaning it refers to slang for alcohol or liquor. It means that the alcohol is needed to get rid of thoughts.

The word "pole" in the sentence "Bassmasters, look how they tote a pole" has the lexical meaning of long or towering objects. But in contextual meaning it refers to slang term for a gun. It refers to the wordplay between how people shoot guns and how people participating in the Bassmaster Classic championship use fishing rods.

The word "diamond and gold" in the sentence "Make a diamond, they just rhymin', me, I'm quotin' gold" has the lexical meaning of gemstones of pure carbon crystal and yellow transition metals. But in contextual meaning it refers to Diamond (10,000,000) and Gold (500,000) certification (award) for song have been sold. It means that J. Cole successfully broke through the song sales of 500,000 and even 10,000,000 copies, thus earning Gold and Diamond Certification.

The word "kennel and dog" in the sentence "Just got off the phone, my (friend), he back in the kennel, my dog lost" has the lexical meaning of shelters for dogs and animal pet. But in contextual meaning it refers to slang for prison and slang for dawg (means for close friend). It refers to J. Cole's friends who ended up in prison.

**Table 11.** Lyrics in close song that contains lexical and contextual meaning

No	Lyrics
1.	"Now you gotta ride around with the toast and you keep that (thing) close"
2.	"You know twelve be takin' notes and they watchin' you close"
3.	"And in time I'ma blow, they gon' label me the GOAT"
4.	"I saw the heat tucked in they coats"

Based on the Table 11 above, it can be seen that the word "toast" in the sentence "Now you gotta ride around with the toast and you keep that (thing) close" has the lexical meaning of roasted tool for bread. But in contextual meaning it refers to slang term for a gun. It refers to J. Cole's friend who carries a gun while driving.

The word "twelve" in the sentence "You know twelve be takin' notes and they watchin' you close" has the lexical meaning of numbers. But in contextual meaning it refers to slang for police. It means that the police will keep a close watch.

The word "GOAT" in the sentence "And in time I'ma blow, they gon' label me the GOAT" has the lexical meaning of furry and horned farm animals. But in contextual meaning it refers to stands for Greatest Of All Time in the hip hop or rap scene. It refers to J. Cole who will be labelled Greatest Of All Time.

The word "heat" in the sentence "I saw the heat tucked in they coats" has the lexical meaning of things that being hot by the fire. But in contextual meaning it refers to hot gun bullets. It refers to gun shooting victims.

**Table 12.** Lyrics in hunger on hillside song that contains lexical and contextual meaning

No	Lyrics
1.	“Runnin' up these Ms by the hour”
2.	“I catch you playin' inside my lane and I'ma foul your (body)”
3.	“Put the whole game on top my back, don't need no chiropract”
4.	“(People) can't see me one-on-one, that's word to Kyla Pratt”
5.	“Ain't doin' Coachella, bookin' me gon' be a lot of Ms”

Based on the Table 12 above, it can be seen that the word “Ms” in the sentence “Runnin' up these Ms by the hour” has the lexical meaning of alphabetical letters. But in contextual meaning it refers to slang for Million-dollar. It refers to the J. Cole's attempt to earn a million dollars in a matter of hours.

The word “playin' and foul” in the sentence “I catch you playin' inside my lane and I'ma foul your (body)” has the lexical meaning of activity of doing the game and committing fraudulent acts or violations. But in contextual meaning it refers to disruptive such as telling lies and looking for trouble and taking revenge with actions. It means that if someone messes up then it will be immediately revenged.

The word “game” in the sentence “Put the whole game on top my back, don't need no chiropract” has the lexical meaning of something can be played. But in contextual meaning it refers to hip-hop industry or rap game. It means that J. Cole dominates the hip hop or rap game industry.

The word “see” in the sentence “(People) can't see me one-on-one, that's word to Kyla Pratt” has the lexical meaning of looking at something. But in contextual meaning it refers to against to see who is better. It means that no one can beat J. Cole at one-on- one situation. The word “Ms” in the sentence “Ain't doin' Coachella, bookin' me gon' be a lot of Ms” has the lexical meaning of alphabetical letters. But in contextual meaning it refers to slang for Million-dollar. It means that if want to book J. Cole, need at least 1 million dollars.

## CONCLUSION

This research has explored the lexical and contextual meanings embedded in J. Cole's The Off-Season album, highlighting how language functions as both a literal and symbolic tool in hip-hop lyrics. By analyzing selected lyrics from the album, it is evident that J. Cole uses a diverse vocabulary that reflects layers of lexical and contextual meaning. The writer found 53 lyric lines that contain lexical and contextual meaning in the whole album The Off-Season by J. Cole. Lexically, J. Cole's choice of words is often taken from standard English, allowing for a wider cultural and emotional resonance. Contextually, these meanings are shifted depending on social themes such as struggle, perseverance, fame, racial identity, and personal growth that are common motifs in hip-hop, yet uniquely articulated through J. Cole's introspective lens. This research shows that understanding lexical meaning alone is not enough without considering the surrounding context, including cultural background, social issues, and the artist's intentions. Therefore, the combination of lexical and contextual meanings in The Off- Season highlights the depth of language in contemporary music and reinforces the importance of analyzing lyrics not just as entertainment but as complex texts worthy of linguistic and literary research. This research contributes to the growing field of linguistic analysis in popular music, particularly hip-hop, and encourages future research on how artists use language to construct identities, challenge norms and inspire listeners.

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