

Wilde's word arrangement, word choice, and implications of both denotative and connotative meaning, exhibited especially on pages 120-121 of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, shows the safety that lies in secrecy and deception for the upper class.

Choice words adequately portray the intertwining relationship between secrecy, safety, and deception. For instance, 'whispered' emphasizes Dorian's frequent secrecy; other members of society believe they know Dorian's true character, yet his despicable reputation would only worsen if one were to glimpse his ghastly portrait. 'Whispered' contrasts with 'charm' as well. People normally praise charming individuals, but, by having characters 'whisper' about Dorian, Wilde draws attention away from Dorian's reality to the perception of his reality, shielding him with secrets known only to a chosen few. Wilde's use of 'security' affirms that class standing and safety are also significantly linked. This applies to both safety in its connotative form as well as safety from conviction as Dorian was not interrogated when Sibyl died. Here, Wilde highlights the upper class' ability to act at will without consequence. Inclusion of the italicized words 'chef' and 'entrees' stand out to the reader. By studying the words' French origin, the reader recognizes more social commentary on Wilde's part. For instance, 'chef' derived its meaning from "head." When Wilde states that "respectability is of much less value than the possession of a good *chef*" (120-21), the reader can conclude that wealthy characters must possess cunning and some forethought to maintain a respectable perception amongst society. However, by placing 'respectability' before '*chef*,' Wilde implies the opposite of his statement, drawing attention to society's placement of reputation before the forethought proceeding actions, furthering the idea that the wealthy have no need to critique their sins. '*Entrée*' comes from the French for "enter;" Wilde seems to offer the idea that even meticulous manners cannot gain entrance into the upper class' society. The wealthy are untouchable and unreachable to the lower classes and, even with

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display of these ‘cardinal virtues,’ the lower class will still not be privy to upper class secrets and lifestyle. Again, secrecy is portrayed as a shield and is a barrier disguised as an insight into upper class reality. Furthermore, by saying ‘form’ is essential to a good society, Wilde emphasizes the shape of an action, not the action itself. Perception is made all about deception, and only the surface of an individual or action warrants attention.

Wilde’s word arrangement also serves the deceptive tendencies of a privileged upper class. For instance, his placement of ‘manners’ before ‘morals’ illustrates Dorian’s dependence on personal secrets and outward appearance—his hidden portrait and true character is overshadowed by his youthful, jovial appearance. Wilde also comments on the delightfulness of plays after remarking on such plays’ ‘insincere characters.’ Here, the reader is left with the final impression that plays, art, and society are enjoyable despite the trickery and secrecy of society’s members. Wilde likens society to a play: entertainment and falsehoods for story’s sake, justifying deception in the name of the final display of onstage character that tells members of society how to perceive what they’re seeing.

As the novel proceeds, Wilde continues to use word denotation and connotation, choice, and arrangement to highlight society’s placement of appearance above action and perception above secrecy and deception. Since safety arises from status and trickery, it is only natural that the upper class employs it to the best of their ability. Dorian does this with only a minutia of occasional regret, emphasizing the worst of individual values while maintaining, temporarily, the best of society’s reception.