

Chris Heafner  
English 102, MW 11:00  
Dr. Chris Heafner  
January 3, 2011

### Every Day Is Halloween—But More Frightening

It's always interesting to hear interviews with the neighbors of convicted serial killers. Almost always, these people contend that the person who is now seen as a monster by the public never seemed to them to be a monster. Often, these neighbors describe how polite and caring the murderer was during the same times that he was committing numerous atrocities. It would not be honest, though, to claim that these murders are alone in their abilities to deceive others. After all, most people regularly hide their feelings, thoughts and opinions from their closest friends and family members. Perhaps this is why Paul Lawrence Dunbar's poem, "We Wear the Mask," is so interesting. This poem helps us to better understand human deception by showing us how we deceive others, why we deceive others and the negative effects of our deceptions.

First, "We Wear the Mask," helps us to better understand human deception by showing us how we deceive others. For Dunbar, the deception is as a "mask" that "we wear" (1). It is worthy of note that he sees our deceptions as a "mask" because, just like Halloween masks, our deception is something we choose to put on; it is not something inherent in us. Also, like a Halloween mask, our deceptions keep others from seeing who we really are. This mask, however, is more subtle than the masks we might wear to a costume ball. In fact, Dunbar insinuates that our "grins and lies" (1) are the masks we use to hide ourselves. What Dunbar is noticing is that a facial expression as simple as a "smile" (1) can deceive others into believing that we are fine or happy when, in reality, we might be in extreme pain. The same is true of our "lies," even the small ones that we might tell to people daily. For instance, if someone asks how you're doing, the common response is "fine," even if you're having a bad day. These small but

frequent lies are undoubtedly what Dunbar sees us doing when we “mouth with myriad subtleties” (1). Just like the little white lies we tell daily (like the expression that we’re “fine” when we are not), the numerous subtle words and phrases that we utter become ways of masking ourselves from others.

In addition to showing us how we deceive others with our masks, Dunbar helps us to understand why we feel the need to deceive others. . . .

Still, Dunbar wants us to understand that there are many downsides to our deceptions. . . .

CONCLUSION: MAKE SURE YOU DON’T SIMPLY REPEAT YOUR THESIS AND YOUR REASONS!

**Please note the formatting of this sample paper. The margins are 1”. The font is Times New Roman, 12pt. Also remember that your name, class, my name, date and title of the paper ARE NOT to be included in the page count. If your paper is short of the two required pages, then it will receive a zero.**