

## Stuck-Up, Supercilious

The epithet *stuck-up* is a schoolyard synonym for “snobbish, vain, conceited, haughty.” Though this expression may sound slangy and modern, it’s been around longer than you might expect. In the 1839 novel *Nicholas Nickelby*, one Charles Dickens character calls another “a nasty stuck-up monkey.”

Were we to draw a conceited person, we’d typically characterize him with his head tipped skyward, casting disdainful glances down his “stuck-up” nose, hence the expression. Another synonym of *stuck up* is *snooty*, derived from the word *snoot*, meaning “snout, nose,” a word which also relies on the upturned nasal protuberance as an emblem of conceit.

The adjective *supercilious* is the Ivy-League synonym in this class of words. Derived from the Latin *supercilium*, meaning “eyebrow,” the word literally means “pertaining to the eyebrow.” Figuratively, however, this word *supercilious* paints a picture of arrogance.

While a haughty person may look down her “stuck-up” nose at those “beneath” her, she might just as well raise an eyebrow in disdain while she’s at it. This renders her *supercilious*, literally “of the eyebrow,” and in an extended sense, “egotistical, proud, full of contempt.” This colorful Latin adjective has a long tradition in our language, dating to 1615.