

Syntax

Consider:

Now, the use of culture is that it helps us, by means of its spiritual standard of perfection, to regard wealth but as machinery, and not only to say as a matter of words that we regard wealth but as machinery, but really to perceive and feel that it is so. If it were not for this purging effect wrought upon our minds by culture, the whole world, the future as well as the present, would inevitably belong to the Philistines.

— Matthew Arnold, “Sweetness and Light,” *Culture and Anarchy*

Discuss:

1. Put the first sentence into your own words. How does the sentence’s complexity add to its impact?
2. Where are the most important words in the second sentence of this passage – at the beginning or at the end? What effect does this have on the reader?

Apply:

Listen to people’s sentences as you talk to them today and keep a record of where speakers place important words: at the beginning or the end of a sentence. Come to the next class with a record of at least 5 sentences and notation indicating where the important words in those sentences were placed. Which is most common, beginning or end weight? Compare your results with the results of others in your class and discuss the implication of these results for analyzing prose.