

Syntax

Consider:

I hear an army charging upon the land,
And the thunder of horses plunging, foam about their knees:
Arrogant, in black armor, behind them stand,
Disdaining the reins, with fluttering whips, the charioteers.
— James Joyce, “I Hear an Army Charging Upon the Land”

Discuss:

1. The subject of the verb *stand* in line 3 is *charioteers* at the end of line 4. How does this inversion of the normal word order (subject-verb) affect the impact of those lines?
2. Examine the adjectives and adjective phrases in lines 3 and 4: *arrogant, in black armor*. What word do these adjectives modify? How does this unusual word order affect the impact of the lines?

Apply:

Write a sentence about a car crash. In your sentence invert the normal order of subject and verb. Try to make your sentence sound natural and powerful. Share your sentence with a partner.