Subject-Verb-Object in Ovid

The basic building blocks of any sentence are the subject, verb, and object. In English, sentences are written in **SVO (Subject-Verb-Object) order**. Any complete sentence must have at least one subject and one verb. Recognizing these elements of a sentence will help your writing and your analysis.

In order to identify the Subject, Verb, and Object of a sentence:

Step 1: Identify the action or form of “to be” (is, are, am, etc.). This is your **verb**.

Step 2: Ask who or what did this action. This is your **subject**.

Step 3: Find who or what received this action. This is your **object.**

Example:

N.B. The “a” of “a serpent” and “her” of “her ankle” modify, meaning they describe, but aren’t, the subject or object.

A serpent bit her ankle.

Step 1: **bit** is the action. (Verb)

Step 2: A **serpent** did the biting. (Subject)

Step 3: her **ankle** received the biting. (Object)

Sometimes, the **subject** receives the action. This is known as **passive voice**, and should be avoided in writing (unless it’s intentional and meaningful).

Example:

I came for my wife’s sake, whose growing years were taken by a snake’s venom.

Looking only at the second part of the sentence:

N.B. You can identify passive voice by looking for “TO BE” VERBS (“were,” in this case) + BY, or the lack an actor (e.g. The cake was eaten).

 Step 1: **were taken** is the action. (Verb)

 Step 2: growing **years** is what were taken. (Subject)

 Step 3: a snake’s **venom** is what did the taking. (Object)

This is where analysis comes in. Why might Ovid (or Orpheus) have made his wife’s growing years, rather than the serpent, the subject of the sentence?

Alright, time to practice. Identify the **Subject, Verb, and Object** of each sentence (write S, V, and O above each word). Indicate any implied subjects or objects:

1. Orpheus mourned her.

2. Love has conquered.

3. To you we all, people and things, belong.

4. Trouble, grief, and tears were all his sustenance.

Now, select one of the previous examples and attempt to analyze the significance of the syntax:

Let’s try a couple more (this time from “Daphne and Apollo”). Some have more than one subject, verb, or object:

1. Love makes me follow.

2. But he ran more swiftly, borne on the wings of love, gave her no rest, shadowed her shoulder, breathed

on her streaming hair.

3. The laurel, stirring, seemed to consent, to be saying “Yes.”

4. Now the first girl Apollo loved was Daphne.

5. Apollo, with pride and glory still upon him over the python slain, saw Cupid bending his tight-strung

little bow.

6. Let the laurel adorn, henceforth, my hair, my lyre, my quiver.

Now, select one of the previous examples and attempt to analyze the significance of the syntax: