

## CLEFT SENTENCES

### 1. Form and use of cleft sentences

In a divided or cleft sentences, information which could given in one clauses is divided into two parts, each with its own verb:

*Vanessa has made the greatest impact.* (normal sentence: single clauses, one verb)

*It is Vanessa who has made the greatest impact.* (cleft sentence: two clauses, two verbs)

We use this pattern to emphasise new information, give explanations or make a contrast with a previous statement:

*All of the Redgrave family are gifted actors. But it is **Vanessa** who was made the greatest impact in the world of feature films.*

### 2. It cleft sentences

It cleft sentences have this pattern:

It **isn't** his outlandish sense of humour that I'm complaining about.

It + a form of be (+ not and/or adverb) + emphasised word/phrase + that/which/who/ clause

It **was** his exploration of the clashes ... that brought him award.

We can use it to emphasise the following:

(neutral)	Tom saw Will Smith at the awards party last night.
subject	It was <b>Tom</b> who saw Will Smith at the awards party last night.
object	It was <b>Will Smith</b> that Tom saw at the awards party last night.
adverbial phrases	It was <b>last night</b> that Tom saw Will Smith at the awards party. It was <b>at the awards party</b> that Tom saw Will Smith last night

We can use when and where (instead of that) in subordinate clauses of time and place:

*It was **in January** when the test results were published.*

*It's **in Green Street market** where the best bargains can be found.*

We do not use how, why or what in this was:

~~It was greed why he did it.~~

It was because of greed that he did it.

~~It is using a calculator how he does it~~

It is by using calculator that he does it.

~~It is the speed of the ride what is so thrilling~~

It is the speed of the ride what is so thrilling

We can reverse it + verb and the emphasised element in it clefts, but only in very formal, literary style:

*And thus Cezanne it was who took the first steps towards Impressionism.*

Less literary: *And so it was Cezanne who took the first steps towards Impressionism.*

**ACADEMIC ENGLISH** The *it* cleft is very common in academic prose, where it presents information as known:

*One of the main effects of publication is the enhancement of the researcher's profile. It is **this** that makes for journals so essential in the academic world.*

### 3 Wh- cleft sentences

We can use this pattern to highlight the action in a sentence:

Wh- clause + a form of be (+not) + emphasised word/phrase

What the manager did **was** (to) change the formation of the team

In these sentences what means „the thing(s) that“. The wh- clause always contains a verb, which is usually a form of do. The emphasised phrase contains an infinitive with or without to. If the emphasised verb is in the continuous or perfect, the form of do matches it:

*The boys aren't leaving Sandy at home. They are taking him to the beach with them.*

*What the boys **are doing** is **taking** Sandy to the beach with them.*

*Old members are absent but the new members have taken their seats in the assembly.*

*What the new members **have done** is **taken** their seats in the assembly*

We use wh- clefts, not it clefts, to highlight the action (verb) in a sentence:

~~It is totally undemocratic that these actions are.~~

What these actions are is totally undemocratic.

We can reverse the order of the parts in wh- cleft sentences and put the emphasised part at the beginning:

*The man appeared to be engrossed in his book, but he wasn't reading. **Watching the factory opposite** was what he was really doing.*

### 4. Other types of cleft sentences

We can use wh- clauses with *when*, *where*, *why* and *who* to highlight a time, a place, a reason or a person, but we usually use an introductor noun phrase (highlighted below).

The wh- clause acts like an ordinary relative clause:

~~Who we forgot to invite was Ian.~~

*We forgot to invite Ian. → **The one/person** (who) we forgot to invite was **Ian**.*

person	<b>The guy</b> who told me about the new club was Zack.
place	<b>The house</b> where I used to live is near here.
time	<b>The day</b> (when) we left was the saddest day of my life.
reason	<b>The reason</b> (why) they never told me is they don't trust me.

We can emphasise a noun phrase or a verb phrase with the (only/last) thing, something or all:

*The **thing** (that) I most disliked about the movie was **the scene in the graveyard**.*

*The **only thing** (that) they want is **a chance to air their grievances**.*

*The **last thing** (that) we did was (to) **pack the kettle**.*

***Something** the surveyor neglected to mention was **the damp in the kitchen**.*

***All** (that) we're asking for is **to be given a chance**.*

We can also use the one/only thing/person with a negative verb:

*The **one thing** (that) this shop **won't do** is **repair goods bought in other shops**.*

*The **only thing** (that) we **didn't find** was **the key to the cellar**.*

*The **one person** (that) **I didn't want** to see just then **walked into the room**.*

1. Read the review and complete the article with phrases from A-L below (not all the phrases are needed). There is one place where two phrases can be used.

### Holiday reads

IF YOU'RE LOOKING for some good books to take on holiday and you like a good detective thriller, you can't do better than the Stieg Larsson *Millennium* trilogy. The three books centre around an unlikely heroine – an anti-social egotistic young woman called Lisbeth Salander. (1) ..... is make this anti-hero a vulnerable and therefore not entirely unlikeable character, which is no mean feat. While the writing (or at least the translation) is fairly mediocre, (2) ..... hooks the reader – these books are fast-moving, sometimes shocking journeys into the criminal underworld in the company of Salander and investigative journalist Mikael Blomqvist. It is through the Blomqvist character (3) ..... with one of the protagonists – he is a hard-bitten journalist but remains sympathetic and keeps his integrity through a series of misadventures.

The characters and general feel of the novels are introduced in *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, and developed through the series. (4) ..... is the graphic violence, although this is kept to a minimum and is never gratuitous.

This trilogy has enjoyed enormous success, and the one thing (5) ....., one has to conclude, is the untimely death of its author, himself an investigative journalist who delved into organised crime and neo-Nazism in Sweden. This, of course, led to endless conspiracy theories – was Larsson murdered? Had he uncovered some awful criminal organisation at the heart of Swedish political life? (6) ..... is the entirely natural, albeit tragic, cause of death – a massive heart attack.

A the thing that some readers might find off-putting

B it is the pace that unlikely

C it makes these theories unlikely

D that has helped fuel its success off-putting

E it is the pace what

F that the reader can identify

G why it has been so popular

H what makes these theories highly

I how the reader can identify

J what some readers might find

K it is what Larsson manages to do

L what Larsson manages to do

2 Read the information below then correct the sentences. Each correction must contain a cleft sentence.

Nick turned up late for work on Monday because he got stuck in a traffic jam on the ring road. Nick had a hands-free mobile phone in his car so he was able to call his manager and warn her that he would be late. She was furious but managed to reschedule an important meeting for the afternoon.

0. The manager arrived late for work on Monday.

No, it was *Nick who arrived late on Monday*.

1. Nick was late because he had overslept.

No, it was ..... that he was late.

2. Nick sent his manager a text message to let her know he'd be late.

No, what Nick ..... from his hands-free phone.

3. Nick was late on Wednesday morning.

No, ..... that he was late.

4. Nick's manager had to start the meeting without him.

No, what she ..... the afternoon.

5. Nick got stuck in a traffic jam in the town centre.

No, not the town centre; it ..... got stuck.

6. The manager had to reschedule the meeting because a client was unable to come.

No, it ..... had to reschedule the meeting.

7. Nick called his manager to give her the sales figures.

No, it ..... that he rang her.

8. Nick's manager felt a little annoyed with him for being late.

No, she didn't feel a little annoyed. What .....

3 Write the second sentence so it has a similar meaning to the first. Use the word in brackets, as in the example.

0. Sebastian left the job because of the long working hours.

(why) *The reason why Sebastian left the job was the long working hours*

1. The union representative called the strike.

(person).....

2. Political analysts do not question his dedication.

(isn't).....

3. These criminals are totally ruthless.

(what).....

4. Dickens used to live around the corner.

(place).....

5. It was the next-door neighbour who complained.

(one).....

6. The children inherited everything except the house.

(only).....

7. The climbers reached the peak at six o'clock.

(was).....

8. They engaged two au pairs to look after the children.

(did).....

9. Before leaving we switched off the power supply.

(last).....

10. The company has imposed a ban on private emails.

(done).....

11. The only thing the customers wanted was to get their money back.  
(all).....
12. The managing director informed the staff of the news.  
(it).....
13. Our mechanics just need five minutes to change the tyres.  
(all).....
14. The introduction of stamp duties led to the loss of the American colonies.  
(that).....

Adapted from *MyGrammarLab Advanced*, Mark Foley, Dianne Hall, Pearson