



Unit 46 – Cleft Sentences (*It was today that we met.. What I like about you is your laugh..*)

Cleft sentences are used to connect known information with newly introduced information. A statement is divided (or 'cleft') into two clauses, thus emphasizing new information. Cleft sentences are often used in conversation to sound more natural.

A) It-clauses are the most common type of cleft clause. **It** is used with '**be**' and the clause that comes after (usually a 'that' clause) contains information already known or considered less important to the listener. For example:

- A:** Mark's laptop was stolen at school today? -> known info: Mark had something stolen at school today
B: No, it was Mark's phone that was stolen! -> new info (focus): it was Mark's phone
A: Isn't it March that you're going on holiday? -> known info: you're going on holiday
B: No, it's in early April when it's warmer. -> new info (focus): it's in early April

Who and **which** can be used instead of *that*; while **when** and **where** can also be used in more informal situations. For the statement, '*It was Sam who stole a bicycle from that shop last week,*' compare the following:

- > **It was a bicycle** which (*that*) Sam stole from that shop last week. (*the new info, 'a bicycle' is the subject*)
-> **It was Sam** who (*that*) stole a bicycle from that shop last week.
-> **It was last week** when (*that*) Sam stole a bicycle from that shop.
-> **It was from that shop** where (*that*) Sam stole a bicycle last week.

Note: -> 'that' (or *who, when, etc.*) can be omitted from the above relative clauses with no change in meaning

Other, more advanced grammar patterns can be used in the it-clause to express additional information:

- > James is a good manager but **it's how he treats his colleagues** *that* makes him so well-respected.
-> **It was to show how much he appreciated my effort** *that* James gave me next Friday off.
-> **A:** Aunt Elma is seriously ill in hospital. **B:** But **it was only the other day** *that/when* I met her for tea.
-> Even after getting fired once in 1984, **it was then Steve Jobs** *that/who* revived the Apple brand.

B) A **wh-clause** is also followed by '**be**' to emphasize certain information in a sentence. A 'to-infinitive' often follows, which can be shortened to a bare-infinitive. Note that this pattern is common in conversational English.

- > **Mom:** This remote control isn't working. **Dad:** **What we should do** *is* (to) get new batteries for it.
-> Tim works for a software company in LA. *or:* **What Tim does** *is* (to) work for a software company in LA.
-> Tom picked up Ann in his new Porche. *or:* **What Tom did** *was* (to) pick up Ann in his new Porche.

A wh-clause can also be used to give *instruction, reason* or *explanation* for certain actions:

- i) **What I'd like you to do this afternoon** *is* work on your team projects until they are done. (*instruction*)
ii) **What happened** *was* transit workers are on strike, thus delaying the morning commute. (*explanation*)
iii) **What I'll need to do then** *is* leave an extra 30 minutes tomorrow morning to avoid delays. (*reason*)

A wh-clause can also be placed at the beginning or at the end of certain sentences:

- > **What annoyed me most** *was* him not apologizing for being late.
-> Him not apologizing for being late *was* **what annoyed me most**.
-> **What I appreciate most about her** *is* her devotion to helping the elderly.
-> Her devotion to helping the elderly *is* **what I appreciate most about her**.

C) Section B (above) shows clauses that begin with 'what' only. Instead of using other wh-clauses (E.g.: *who, when, where, why*) at the start of sentences, it is natural to use a noun that has a meaning related to the wh-word. For example, '*somebody*' instead of *who*, '*the moment*' rather than *when*. Note the following examples:

- > **The stadium** (*where/that*) the Tigers play home games at *is* being renovated this year.
-> **Somebody** (*who/that*) I like exercising with *is* Steve. He's really knowledgeable about fitness!
-> **The reason** (*why/that*) he got a puppy during the pandemic *was* to keep himself active.
-> **The moment** (*when/that*) Neil Armstrong stepped on the moon *was* a celebration for humanity.
-> **The time** (*when/that*) my friends surprised me on my birthday *was* a moment I'll never forget.



Unit 46 – Exercises:

46.1 – Read the information about John’s day and then complete the replies using cleft sentences. (46-A)



John arrived late for work yesterday morning because his bicycle got a flat tire on the riverside trail during his morning commute. Fortunately, there was a bike shop nearby that was able to fix his tire quickly. John called his manager to explain what had happened but Katherine was annoyed at the delay as she had to reschedule an important meeting with a client to Friday.

1. Didn't John arrive late for work this morning? -> **No, it was yesterday morning that John arrived late.**
2. John was late because he overslept, wasn't he? -> _____.
3. Wasn't the meeting rescheduled for later today? -> _____.
4. Didn't John get a flat tire on the city river bridge? -> _____.
5. John was able to fix the tire himself, wasn't he? -> _____.

46.2 – Rewrite the following sentences without changing their meaning by focusing on the underlined words. Start with **it + be** and use an appropriate **wh-word** or **that**. (46-A)

1. We had a wonderful time on our stay in the Philippines but the climb to the top of a volcano made it the most memorable. *We had a wonderful time on our stay in the Philippines but **it was the climb to the top of a volcano that made it the most memorable.***
2. Jeff was in the hospital for surgery so I paid him a visit to cheer him up while he recovered. *Jeff was in the hospital for surgery so _____.*
3. Helen never found learning English very easy, and she improved her speaking skills only by doing a language program abroad. *Helen never found learning English very easy, and _____.*
4. The newly elected president thanked several people during his acceptance speech, but he dedicated the victory to his voters the most. *The newly elected president thanked several people during his acceptance speech, but _____.*

46.3 – Write a response to A’s question by correcting what they said using an appropriate **wh-clause**. (46-B)

1. A: Did you say that you need to borrow the car for your interview? (pick up Matt / airport)
B: **No, what I said is that I need to borrow the car to pick up Matt from the airport.**
2. A: Would you like to discuss the budget with me in private? (discuss / budget / next week’s meeting)
B: _____.
3. A: Did you buy your dog from a pet shop at the department store? (adopt / shelter / countryside)
B: _____.
4. A: Did Steve buy Mary the sweater she had been talking about? (give / gift certificate instead)
B: _____.
5. A: Your new patio looks beautiful! Did you build it yourself? (hire / neighbor / build it for us)
B: _____.

46.4 – Complete the following **wh-clauses** using your own ideas and by following the sentence prompts. (46-C)

1. **The country (where / that)** I'd like to travel to most is **Morocco because of its renowned traditional markets.**
2. **A long term goal (which / that)** I have in life is _____.
3. _____ (____ / ____) I'd like to meet someday is _____.
4. _____ (____ / ____) I am learning English is _____.
5. _____ (____ / ____) I found out I was _____.
6. _____ (____ / ____) Steve Jobs introduced the iPhone _____.