EMPHATIC STRUCTURES: CLEFT SENTENCES

Cleft means divided. In a cleft sentence, information which could be given in one clause is divided into two parts, each with its own verb. This way you give extra emphasis to part of the sentence

It was Tom who didn’t want to come.

**It Cleft sentences:**

**IT + BE (+ NOT AND/OR ADVERB) + EMPHASISED WORD/PHRASE + THAT (WHO) CLAUSE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SENTENCE</th>
<th>Mike took Sally to the party on Saturday.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EMPHASIS ON THE SUBJECT</td>
<td>It was Mike who took Sally to the party on Saturday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPHASIS ON THE OBJECT</td>
<td>It was Sally that Mike took to the party on Saturday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPHASIS ON THE ADVERBIAL</td>
<td>It was on Saturday that Mike took Sally to the party.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPHASIS ON THE PREP. PHRASE</td>
<td>It was to the party that Mike took Sally on Saturday.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**WH- cleft sentences:**

WH- Clause + BE + EMPHASISED WORD / PHRASE

In these sentences WHAT means THE THING(S) THAT. The WH-clause must contain a verb. To highlight the action we use a form of DO in the WH-clause. The highlighted phrase usually contains a bare infinitive or TO + INF.

If the highlighted verb is in the continuous or perfect, the form of DO matches it.

The boys are taking Sandy to the match → What the boys are doing is taking Sandy to the match.

**Other cleft sentences**

The thing that I most disliked was the colour of her dress.
The only thing I won’t do is phone her again.
All you need is love.

from LONGMAN ADVANCED LEARNER’S GRAMMAR. UNIT 34
EMPHATIC STRUCTURES: CLEFT SENTENCES

EXERCISES

READ THE INFORMATION IN THE BOX THEN COMPLETE THE REPLIES. EACH REPLY 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. Luckily Nick has a mobile phone so he was able to phone his boss and warn her that he would be late. She was furious but managed to reschedule an important meeting for the afternoon.

1. Nick was late because he overslept, wasn’t he?
   No, it ______________________________________________________ that he was late.

2. How on earth did Nick let the boss know he’d be late?
   Well, what _______________________________________________ call her from his mobile phone.

3. Wasn’t Nick late on Wednesday?
   No, _________________________________________________ that he was late.

4. Nick’s boss had to start the meeting without him, didn’t she?
   No, what she ______________________________________ the afternoon.

5. Didn’t Nick get stuck in a traffic jam in the town centre?
   No, not in the town centre; it _____________________________________ got stuck.

6. I heard the boss was a little annoyed with Nick for being late.
   No, she wasn’t “a little annoyed”. What ____________________________________!

FOR EACH OF THE SENTENCES BELOW, WRITE A NEW SENTENCE AS SIMILAR AS POSSIBLE IN MEANING TO THE ORIGINAL SENTENCE, BUT USING THE WORDS GIVEN IN BOLD.

1. We just need 5 minutes to fix it. ALL
   ________________________________________________________________

2. I’m not questioning his dedication. ISN’T
   ________________________________________________________________

3. These men are totally ruthless. WHAT
   ________________________________________________________________

4. We inherited everything except the house. ONLY THING
   ________________________________________________________________

5. You know the sales assistant told me exactly the same thing. THAT’S
   ________________________________________________________________

6. We’re taking the au-pair with us. DOING
   ________________________________________________________________

FROM LONGMAN ADVANCED LEARNER’S GRAMMAR. UNIT 34
EMPHATIC STRUCTURES: CLEFT SENTENCES

EXERCISES KEY

READ THE INFORMATION IN THE BOX THEN COMPLETE THE REPLIES. EACH REPLY MUST CONTAIN A CLEFT SENTENCE.

1. Nick was late because he overslept, wasn’t he?
   No, it WAS BECAUSE OF THE TRAFFIC JAM that he was late.

2. How on earth did Nick let the boss know he’d be late?
   Well, what HE DID WAS (TO) call her from his mobile phone.

3. Wasn’t Nick late on Wednesday?
   No, it WAS ON MONDAY that he was late.

4. Nick’s boss had to start the meeting without him, didn’t she?
   No, what she DID WAS (TO) RESCHEDULE THE MEETING FOR the afternoon.

5. Didn’t Nick get stuck in a traffic jam in the town centre?
   No, not in the town centre; it WAS ON THE RING ROAD THAT NICK got stuck.

6. I heard the boss was a little annoyed with Nick for being late.
   No, she wasn’t “a little annoyed”. What SHE WAS WAS FURIOUS!

FOR EACH OF THE SENTENCES BELOW, WRITE A NEW SENTENCE AS SIMILAR AS POSSIBLE IN MEANING TO THE ORIGINAL SENTENCE, BUT USING THE WORDS GIVEN IN BOLD.

1. We just need 5 minutes to fix it. ALL
   ALL WE NEED IS 5 MINUTES (TO FIX IT)

2. I’m not questioning his dedication. ISN’T
   IT ISN’T HIS DEDICATION THAT I’M QUESTIONING.

3. These men are totally ruthless. WHAT
   WHAT THESE MEN ARE IS TOTALLY RUTHLESS.

4. We inherited everything except the house. ONLY THING
   THE ONLY THING WE DIDN’T INHERIT WAS THE HOUSE.

5. You know the sales assistant told me exactly the same thing. THAT’S
   THAT’S EXACTLY WHAT THE SALES ASSISTANT TOLD ME.

6. We’re taking the au-pair with us. DOING
   WHAT WE ARE DOING IS TAKING THE AU-PAIR WITH US.