

Cleft Sentences (It was... that, What I need is...) – Worksheet 1

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ Score: / 40



Do this worksheet
online and check your
answers instantly

Exercise 1: Complete the cleft sentences

Complete each sentence with the correct form of the word in brackets.

Example: It ___ (be) the weather that ruined our trip. → was

1. It _____ (be) my sister who found the keys, not me.
2. What I need right now _____ (be) a long holiday.
3. What she did was _____ (call) the police immediately.
4. _____ (be) it you who left the back door open last night?
5. It _____ (not / be) the price that put me off; it was the colour.
6. What happened _____ (be) that the server crashed during the presentation.
7. Who _____ (be) it that recommended this restaurant?
8. What I don't understand _____ (be) why nobody told us earlier.

Exercise 2: Use the words from the box

Complete each sentence with a word from the box. There are two extra words.

Example: ___ annoys me is the constant noise. → What

WORD BOX

what who that all reason place thing which where

9. It was Daniel _____ organised the whole event.
10. _____ surprised me most was how calm she stayed.
11. I don't want anything else. _____ I want is a cup of tea.
12. The _____ why I left early was that I felt unwell.
13. The _____ where we first met is now a café.
14. The _____ I love most about this city is the food.
15. It was in 2015 _____ they moved to Lisbon.
16. It wasn't until midnight _____ the guests finally left.

Exercise 3: Rewrite for emphasis

Rewrite each sentence as a cleft sentence, beginning with the words in brackets.

Example: Tom told me the news. (It was...) → It was Tom who told me the news.

17. Lucy broke the vase. (It was...)

18. I need some fresh air. (What...)

19. We met in Prague. (It was in...)

20. The noise annoys me. (What...)

21. He didn't realise his mistake until the next morning. (It wasn't until...)

22. She sold her car. (What she did...)

23. Did Anna send you this message? (Was it...)

24. I don't like his attitude. (What I don't like...)

Exercise 4: Correct the mistakes

Each sentence has one mistake. Write the corrected sentence.

Example: It was Sara which won the prize. → It was Sara who won the prize.

25. What I need are a strong coffee.

26. It was my brother which fixed the car.

27. What he did was to apologised to everyone.

28. It was in Rome when I first tried real gelato.

29. It is the side effects that worries me.

30. Who was it that did you invite?

31. What I really enjoy it is cooking for friends.

32. It wasn't until she left that I didn't realise how much I missed her.

Exercise 5: Put the words in order

Put the words in the correct order to make cleft sentences.

Example: was / it / Ben / that / called → It was Ben that called.

33. was / it / who / Maria / the / answered / phone

34. is / what / time / need / I / more

35. it / that / was / you / where / met / him / ?

36. until / wasn't / it / that / 10 p.m. / arrived / they

37. did / was / he / what / resign

38. all / is / she / to / wants / travel

39. thing / the / worries / that / me / is / cost / the

40. it / was / you / that / ? / phoned / me

Answer key – Cleft Sentences (It was... that, What I need is...) – Worksheet 1

Exercise 1: Complete the cleft sentences

1. was

The it-cleft uses 'It was' to focus on a past action's subject.

2. is

A wh-clause as subject takes a singular verb: What I need is...

3. call

The reviewer's answer 'call' is already accepted, because a pseudo-cleft with 'What + subject + did was' takes the bare infinitive (or, less commonly, the to-infinitive).

4. Was

In a cleft question, invert 'it' and 'was': Was it you who...?

5. wasn't

A negative it-cleft contrasts the wrong focus with the correct one.

6. was

'What happened was that...' introduces a whole event as the focus.

7. was

Wh-question cleft: Who was it that...?

8. is

A negative wh-clause is still followed by 'is' in the present.

Exercise 2: Use the words from the box

9. who

The reviewer's answer 'who' is already accepted, because both 'who' and 'that' are correct after a person in focus in an it-cleft.

10. What

'What' introduces the clause that acts as the subject of the wh-cleft.

11. All

'All I want is...' means 'the only thing I want is...'

12. reason

'The reason why... was that...' focuses on a cause.

13. place

'The place where...' focuses on a location.

14. thing

'The thing (that) I love most is...' works like a wh-cleft.

15. that

When the focus is a time or place phrase, use 'that', not 'when' or 'where'.

16. that

The fixed pattern is 'It wasn't until... that...'

Exercise 3: Rewrite for emphasis

17. It was Lucy who broke the vase.

Put the focused person after 'It was' and continue with 'who/that'.

18. What I need is some fresh air.

Move the object to the end after 'What I need is'.

19. It was in Prague that we met.

A focused place phrase is followed by 'that'.

20. What annoys me is the noise.

'What' replaces the subject, and the focus comes after 'is'.

21. It wasn't until the next morning that he realised his mistake.

The negative moves to 'It wasn't until', so the main verb becomes positive.

22. What she did was sell her car.

Use 'What + subject + did was + (to) infinitive' to focus on an action.

23. Was it Anna who sent you this message?

Cleft questions invert 'it was' and keep the relative clause affirmative.

24. What I don't like is his attitude.

The negative stays in the wh-clause and the focus follows 'is'.

Exercise 4: Correct the mistakes

25. What I need is a strong coffee.

A wh-clause subject is singular, so use 'is'.

26. It was my brother who fixed the car.

For people, use 'who' or 'that', not 'which'.

27. What he did was apologise to everyone.

The reviewer's answer is already accepted, because the only error is the past form 'apologised', and both 'apologise' and 'to apologise' are correct after 'What he did was'.

28. It was in Rome that I first tried real gelato.

In it-clefts, use 'that' after a focused place or time phrase.

29. It is the side effects that worry me.

The verb agrees with the plural focus 'the side effects'.

30. Who was it that you invited?

The clause after 'that' uses normal word order, without 'did'.

31. What I really enjoy is cooking for friends.

Don't add an extra subject pronoun before 'is' in a wh-cleft.

32. It wasn't until she left that I realised how much I missed her.

The negative is already in 'It wasn't until', so the second verb is positive.

Exercise 5: Put the words in order

33. It was Maria who answered the phone.

It + was + focus + who + rest of the clause.

34. What I need is more time.

What + subject + verb + is + focus.

35. Where was it that you met him?

Question word + was it + that + normal word order.

36. It wasn't until 10 p.m. that they arrived.

It wasn't until + time + that + clause.

37. What he did was resign.

What + subject + did + was + base verb.

38. All she wants is to travel.

All + subject + verb + is + focus (to-infinitive).

39. The thing that worries me is the cost.

'The thing that...' works like 'What...' to delay and stress the focus.

40. Was it you that phoned me?

Yes/no cleft questions start with 'Was it'.

Notes for teachers: Start by contrasting a neutral sentence with its cleft versions and ask which part is being emphasised; reading the clefts aloud with stress on the focused element helps learners hear the contrast. Typical mistakes include using 'which' or 'when' instead of 'who/that' in it-clefts, wrong verb agreement after the focus (It is the costs that worries...), adding an extra pronoun (What I enjoy it is...), and inflecting the verb after 'What he did was' (was apologised). As a follow-up, have pairs correct deliberately false statements about each other using contrastive clefts (It wasn't me who..., it was...).