

Unit 9: CLEFT SENTENCES

Cleft sentences help to focus on a particular part of a sentence. They are called “cleft” (from the verb “to cleave” = break into two parts) because they are divided into two parts, a main clause and a subordinate clause.

He broke the vase. ⇒ It was him who broke the vase.

simple sentence *main* + *subordinate*
 clause *clause*

A. What-clauses

What + clause + (the appropriate form of) *be* + EMPHASIZED PART

The police are going to **charge him with blackmail.**

What + the police are going to do + is + (to) **charge him with blackmail.**

The police are going to charge him with **blackmail.**

What + the police are going to charge him with + is + **blackmail.**

Note: Sometimes “all” is used instead of “what” (e.g. He only needs a little more time. ⇒ All he needs is a little more time.)

B. It-clauses

It + (the appropriate form of) *be* + EMPHASIZED PART + relative clause

Their accountant was accused of stealing all their money last year.

It + was + **their accountant** + **that/who** was accused of stealing all their money last year.

Their accountant was accused of **stealing all their money** last year.

It + was + **stealing all their money** + (**that**) their accountant was accused of last year.

Their accountant was accused of stealing all their money **last year.**

It + was + **last year** + (**that**) their accountant was accused of stealing all their money.

1 Rewrite each sentence in such a way that it is as similar as possible in meaning to the sentence before it.

a I know what you did to her. You broke her heart.

What _____ break _____

b I know what she did. She upset all her colleagues by being so arrogant.

What _____ arrogance.

c I know why he was attracted to this job; he wanted to give people orders.

What _____ authority _____

d I know what persuaded him to resign. He wasn't being given credit for his achievements.

What _____ achieved.

2 Finish each sentence in such a way that it is as similar as possible in meaning to the sentence before it.

a I only realised she was a foreigner when she opened her mouth.

It was _____

b Your place of birth doesn't determine your accent; the place you spend your childhood in does.

It's not where _____

c His actions didn't bring about his downfall; lying about them did.

It wasn't what _____

d You don't know who your real friends are until a time like that.

It's only _____

e His jokes in themselves are not funny; his manner of telling them is.

It's how _____