Cleft sentences

IN ENGLISH GRAMMAR, A CLEFT IS A CONSTRUCTION IN WHICH SOME ELEMENT IN A SENTENCE IS MOVED FROM ITS NORMAL POSITION INTO A SEPARATE CLAUSE TO GIVE IT GREATER EMPHASIS. A CLEFT IS ALSO KNOWN AS A CLEFT SENTENCE, A CLEFT CONSTRUCTION, AND A CLEFT CLAUSE.

THERE ARE SEVERAL TYPES OF INTRODUCTIONS FOR CLEFT SENTENCES, ALTHOUGH THE TWO MAIN STRUCTURES ARE:

- **IT + BE + EMPHASISED SUBJECT + (WHO OR THAT) + CLAUSE**
- **WHAT + CLAUSE + BE + EMPHASISED PHRASE CLAUSE**

THE IT INTRODUCTION PLACES THE CLAUSE YOU WANT TO EMPHASISE FIRST AND THE WHAT INTRODUCTION PLACES THE EMPHASIS CLAUSE SECOND. THEY ARE USED FOR DIFFERENT EMPHASIS PURPOSES.

It - cleft sentences

The structure of these sentences tells us exactly what word or words we are supposed to pay attention to. The structure is:

<u>It + BE verb + emphasized information + who/that/when +known information</u>

Notice that the emphasized information always appears after It + BE verb. Most it-clefts use the past tense of BE and begin with the words "It was."

EXAMPLE:

Sentence : Mike took Sally to the party on Saturday

- Emphasis on the subject - It was Mike who took Sally to the party on Saturday.
- Emphasis on the object - It was Sally that Mike took to the party on Saturday.
- Emphasis on the adverbial - It was on Saturday that Mike took Sally to the party.
- Emphasis on the prep. phrase - It was to the party that Mike took Sally on Saturday.

You can use other pronouns in place of "it" to make cleft sentences.Those were my books that you borrowed.That is my pencil that you broke.There is the guitar that I want to purchase.

Wh- cleft sentences

WH cleft sentences are also sometimes called pseudo cleft sentences. In pseudo-cleft sentences, the emphasis (focus) is usually at the end of the sentence.
This is the basic structure of a WH (pseudo) cleft sentence:

<u>What clause + be verb + emphasized word or phrase</u>

These cleft sentences begin with WH words such as what, why, where and the words all, the thing, something, one thing.
In WH cleft sentences, the understood (old) information is at the beginning of the sentence rather than the end of the sentence. The focus (new information) is at the end of the sentence.

EXAMPLE:

- Emphasis on a word/phrase
  Wh-clause + be + highlighted word/phrase - What I ignore about him is his rudeness".
- Emphasis on an action
  What + subject + do + be + infinitive clause - What John did yesterday was steal a book from the library.
  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 boy are doing is taking Sandy to the beach / What the boys are doing is take Sandy to the match.
- Emphasis on a whole sentence
  What happen is we always end up having a row.

You can use ALL instead of WHAT when you want to put the emphasis on just one thing:

ALL + SUBJECT + WANT + BE + ...

EXAMPLE :

What do you want for Christmas? - ALL I want fro Christmas is you.

Other cleft sentences

We can also use why, where, how, etc. to - introduce this structure of cleft sentence:

- Emphasis on a person - The person who + ... + be + Subject
  The person who told me about it was Mike.
- Emphasis on a thing - The thing / Something / One thing + ... + be + thing
  The thing/ something / one thing I want is a cup of tea.
- Emphasis on a place - The place where + ... + be + place
  The place where he went for some business is Turkey.
- Emphasis on a certain time - The year/day /month when + ... + be + ...
  The year when I graduated from university was the most difficult time of my life.
- Emphasis on a certain reason - The reason why + ... + be + reason
  The reason why I fell out with her was her extreme rudeness.